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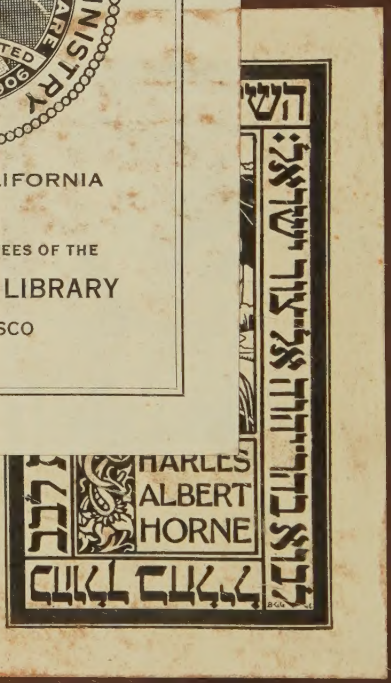

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PHILOSOPHY OF THE INFINITE:

A TREATISE ON

MAN'S KNOWLEDGE OF THE INFINITE BEING

IN ANSWER TO

SIR WILLIAM HAMILTON AND DEAN MANSEL.

BY THE REV. HENRY CALDERWOOD, LL.D.
PROFESSOR OF MORAL PHILOSOPHY, UNIVERSITY OF EDINBURGH.

Οὔτε ἡ γνῶσις ἄνευ πίστεως,
Οὔτε ἡ πίστις ἄνευ γνώσεως.
CLEM. ALEX.

THIRD EDITION.

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PREFACE TO THIRD EDITION.

In publishing what is little more than a cheaper issue of this work, prepared with the view of meeting the requirements of students attending the University, I have availed myself of the opportunity for condensing in the Appendix the reply to Sir W. Hamilton's Letter.

I have further taken occasion to sketch the more advanced results of Anthropological science, specially as represented in the very valuable work of Mr. Tylor on *Primitive Culture.*

I cannot pass without remark the sad fact, that death has deprived us of the distinguished defender and expounder of Sir W. Hamilton's Philosophy of the Conditioned. His volume in defence of the doctrine is one of his most recent contributions to philosophy. In that volume is a passage of much importance, to which I have turned attention in the Appendix. After private correspondence with Dr. Mansel concerning this passage, I had hoped for a further development of the theory from one so eminently competent for the task. But the pen has fallen from his hand, and we are left to lament that his work here is ended.

3935

If it be allowed me at some future time to put the present work into what I should be willing to regard as its final form, I shall then recast and condense the whole, as concerned with a controversy which I may regard as closed.

H. C.

University of Edinburgh,
29*th November* 1871.

PREFACE TO THE SECOND EDITION.

In the present edition, this work is very greatly enlarged. Besides containing a distinct reply to the letter of Sir W. Hamilton, it embraces an answer, in detail, to Dr. Mansel's Bampton Lectures on the *Limits of Religious Thought.*

The course which the discussion has taken, since the publication of the former edition, has convinced me of the need for entering with much greater fulness into the consideration of those fundamental principles, to which I had previously been contented to appeal. I have accordingly attempted a careful examination into the nature and authority of our belief in the existence of the Infinite Being; the relation of faith and knowledge; and the characteristics of knowledge and thought. The chapters on these subjects may, I hope, prove an important addition.

The only change of view to be noted, concerns our conception of Time and Space. The conclusions which I have been led to adopt, are sufficiently indicated in the chapter devoted specially to the subject.

Every criticism which has come under my notice,

has received very patient consideration. The results of protracted reflection, must now be judged by my readers.

I cannot allow this edition to pass into the hands of the public, without expressing profound reverence for the memory of Sir W. Hamilton, and a strong sense of the loss which the cause of Philosophy has sustained by his removal. The letter which he addressed to me shortly after the appearance of my volume, has been for some time before the public in the Appendix to his *Lectures on Metaphysics;* the answer to it is to be found in the Appendix to this edition. The conviction that he could not be long amongst us, was the main inducement to me to adventure upon an early publication of my views, that he might have the opportunity of replying to the arguments employed, if he thought fit to do so. The letter which I had the honour to receive from him, is a valuable fragment; and, though it has not abated my opposition to his doctrine, no antagonism of opinion can alter the ardent affection I have cherished for my revered preceptor.

I have to express my obligations to my brother, Mr. John Calderwood, Edinburgh, for his aid in revising the proof-sheets, and for some contributions to Appendix B; and to Mr. John Gibson, Hamilton, for the carefully prepared synopsis in the Table of Contents, and for the Index, besides help in the work of revision.

H. C.

Glasgow, 23*th March* 1861.

PREFACE TO THE FIRST EDITION.

The work now presented to the public is intended as an illustration and defence of the proposition, that man has a positive conception of the Infinite. It is an attempt, by a careful analysis of consciousness, to prove that man does possess a notion of an Infinite Being, and, since such is the case, to ascertain the peculiar nature of the conception, and the particular relations in which it is found to arise. The discussion, therefore, belongs essentially to the sphere of the higher Metaphysics, and involves a course of speculation on many points not generally agitated by our Scotch philosophers, and even on some which have not hitherto, so far as I am aware, been contemplated in the philosophy of this country.

However great is the fondness for truth, and however strong the desire for its attainment, it is felt as an unfortunate characteristic of all our researches, that we have to advance to the determination of positive truth, in the midst of the conflict of contending opinions. This I have found to be painfully the case in the present instance. As I have prosecuted the argument in defence of what I firmly believe to be truth, I have found it necessary to differ from Sir W. Hamilton to a degree

which is painful to one who has been indebted to the instructions of that distinguished philosopher. I feel for Sir W. Hamilton a degree of esteem and respect which can be thoroughly appreciated only by those who have listened to his prelections. Notwithstanding this, however, I have endeavoured to pursue my investigations concerning the Philosophy of the Infinite, with that love of mental science, and that independence of thought, which have been imbibed under his influence, and which it is his peculiar honour to cultivate. And, although I have come to results differing widely from those of Sir W. Hamilton, I know too much of the spirit of his philosophy to imagine that he will regard it as unbecoming or disrespectful.

I have not the presumption to suppose that I have completely examined, and unerringly determined, all the points involved in a question so difficult and mysterious. My end has been gained, if I have made some contribution to the Philosophy of the Infinite, and have started speculations which may lead to the closer investigation of a theme so important and so grand.

H. C.

Edinburgh, *September* 1854.

CONTENTS.

CHAPTER I.

Statement of the Question.

Natural inquiry, what are the limits of thought? how it arises: the mind, though conscious of its own limitation, also recognises a Being, Infinite and Unrestricted—Apart from his relation to this Infinite Being, man's existence inexplicable—What the nature and extent of this relation; at once the most interesting and difficult question in Philosophy—The soul's intense and unquenchable longing after this knowledge—Have we a *belief* in the Infinite Being? if we have, can we pass from the region of Faith to that of Knowledge? As to the first question, two contending parties; as to the second, two parties—Seeming contradiction between the Logical and Psychological answers to the question of possible Knowledge: reconciliation—Four opinions concerning the Unconditioned. Kant's theory: a *regulative* recognition of the Infinite; his doctrine self-contradictory—Schelling's: sinking of consciousness in the Absolute: baseless and absurd—These two to be set aside—Cousin's and Hamilton's: what? how connected with the preceding—Occasion of the present work—Quotation from Morell, expressive of the general feeling regarding Hamilton's Theory—Purpose of the present chapter, to state the question, and the grounds of its discussion—Hamilton and Cousin agree in admitting a *necessary belief* in the Infinite—Hamilton's view: denies the possible Knowledge of the Infinite; how; supported and developed by Dr. Mansel—Grounds of this denial; thought only of the *Relative*—"The Infinite as in thought," is convertible with "Infinite thought," but not with "thought of the Infinite"—No one affirms the former absurdity: any number of contradictions may be evolved from it, but to no purpose—The possibility of a Knowledge of the Infinite *as existing*, the true question; Hamilton at once denies and affirms it—Cousin's theory: the Finite and Infinite necessarily known together, as co-relatives; it contains a central truth, though encumbered with much matter, useless and untenable—His doctrine of the Impersonal Reason, false—Though upholding his central doctrine, the present theory differs materially—Statement of the author's views: negative view as well as positive—Positive: Sphere and method of inquiry; Psychological; why? facts of consciousness bearing on the question; *primitive belief* in the Divine existence; how evolved; knowledge *immediate: mediate* knowledge through finite existence; partial, but capable of indefinite increase—Negative view: man cannot rise from the

PAGE

finite to the infinite, by an indefinitely magnified image; that the cognition of the "Unconditioned" is that of Τὸ Ἓν καὶ Πᾶν, denied; that the Absolute, if known, must be adequately known, denied; *a part* of the infinite can *not* be known, because He is One—Theory more especially opposed to Hamilton's—His definition of the Unconditioned baseless; a mere abstraction cannot restrict us—Mansel has followed out Hamilton's speculations, and gone farther—Dangerous tendency of the speculations of both—what here essayed, ... 1

CHAPTER II.

Belief in the Existence of One Infinite Being.

Upon what authority is the Divine existence affirmed?—Belief precedes knowledge: natural order of inquiry—Consciousness reveals *self* and *not-self*: Idealism and Materialism equally self-contradictory—Man desiderates an explication of existence, external, internal—*Facts* to be explained *many; Problem* necessarily *one*—It must refer to *all* finite existence: error of natural theologians, one-sidedness—Paley: objective argument: subjective, 1, metaphysical, Clarke; 2, moral, Sir W. Hamilton—Danger of this unnatural division of the problem; leads to apparent insufficiency and doubt—However, all acknowledge other evidence besides what they have specially set forth, excepting Hamilton—His statements: mental phenomena said alone to require a Divine Cause; his qualification; position denied—Matter not contradictory of mind; not tending to Atheism: Hamilton inconsistent—True process of thought regarding this problem—The hypothesis of eternity of matter was presented to meet the question concerning the origin of evil, not the present; metaphysically contradictory—The occasions on which our Belief in the Infinite is awakened: Belief Natural and Necessary—Criteria of Necessary Beliefs applied—1. This belief, like other first principles, rises when required, but not otherwise; this condition of manifestation modifies the application of the two following tests—2. This belief is necessary; the necessity metaphysical, not logical: the belief belongs to man, as man: (1.) most men believe in God's existence, apart from all arguments for it; (2.) arguments insufficient: *A priori* proofs involve a *petitio principii:* Clarke's examined: arguments from design likewise invalid; from a *finite* effect we cannot infer an *Infinite* cause: (3) the Atheist is a self-contradiction, out of harmony with himself and the world: metaphysical and logical necessity: that the belief may be denied is no objection—3. This belief is universal: remarkable it should be so, considering the first condition: conscience requires the recognition of God; diverse and low views of Deity the natural result of moral degradation; no objection, but rather a confirmation: Dr. M'Cosh denies the position here held—His "cumulative" theory of the belief in the Infinite examined; insufficient—Our belief is in an Infinite *Personality:* Dr. Mansel contradicts himself on this point—Importance of the admission of this *belief* by the Hamiltonian school: a great defect of their system is want of explicitness on the relation of *Faith* to Knowledge; this of

PAGE

utmost moment in the determination of the controverted question—Statement of Hamilton's views, somewhat uncertain; of Dr. Mansel's, clear—Conclusions from their admissions: 1. "Infinite" does not denote a mere negation of thought, but the Supreme Being; this sweeps away Hamilton's distinction of the Absolute and Infinite: 2. The Infinite is not the sum of existence; this subversive of much German speculation, and of many of Hamilton's and Mansel's reasonings: 3. Not a Being of Infinite extension; the false basis of many speculations thus swept away; God has no parts: 4. Exists in relation, and in distinction from finite existence; this overturns many of Dr. Mansel's contradictions: 5. The Infinite can act and be unchanged: 6. Our belief does not deny the possibility of an essential relation *within* the Deity—Examination of contradictions said by Dr. Mansel to belong to the conception of the Infinite and Absolute—Conclusion, ... 29

CHAPTER III.

The Province of Faith as related to that of Knowledge.

Importance of the subject: its compass; distribution—I. *The Province of Faith:* its determination essential to the present inquiry—Method proposed, positive and negative—1. What Faith includes—(*a*) It simply and absolutely affirms; this true of our belief in the Infinite—(*b*) Faith receptive, and declaratory, not constructive—If Faith declares *that* a thing is, it must reveal *what* it is, as distinct from other objects of consciousness—Dr. Mansel's view examined; Faith only "regulative and practical" according to him; his inconsistency—Faith makes revelations more or less full, according to the exigency of inquiry: this accounts for the obscure and meagre views of the Deity amongst savages and uninquiring minds—2. What Faith excludes—(*a*) Does not vindicate its own revelation—(*b*) Faith does not reconcile its deliverance with any other standard of truth—II. *The Relation between Faith and Knowledge*—Knowledge and Belief harmonize, even coalesce, but never contradict each other—1. Knowledge prior in time—2. Faith the basis of Knowledge—3. Faith is more extensive than Knowledge: in a twofold aspect; (*a.*) As giving a wider revelation; (*b.*) As not only *beyond*, but *above* Knowledge, authoritatively—4. Faith and Knowledge are mutual complements, and necessarily connected—5. They harmonize; the mind is *one*—(*a.*) In so far as Faith underlies Knowledge, the harmony is evident—(*b.*) In so far as it outstretches Knowledge, the harmony is not fully perceptible, but unquestionable; all difficulties arise from the limitation of our cognitive powers—Three guiding maxims: 1. We are to seek all possible harmony between our Knowledge and Faith; 2. What distinctly contradicts our Faith, is to be denied of the Deity; 3. When the harmony cannot be discovered, a contradiction cannot be affirmed—6. All Faith implies Knowledge; a contested point; destructive of Hamilton's doctrine of the Infinite—His inconsistency; he treats of our beliefs as cognitive, and as primary conditions of intelligence—It is impossible for Faith to regulate action without regulating thought; Dr. Mansel's view untenable: the dogma of negative thinking supposed

PAGE

to explain the apparent inconsistency—Our necessary belief in the Infinite Being involves an immediate Knowledge; this statement to be tested only by an appeal to consciousness—We attain a mediate knowledge of God through His works, and *of Him as Infinite*—The Absolute as such, a cause—Our belief in the Infinite God rises at once; the knowledge, primary and immediate accompanying it, is unfolded gradually; its development is the result of observing and generalizing under the guidance of our primary conviction—Faith is the basis of all reasoning concerning God—Conclusion; the progression of Philosophy and Theology, ... 99

CHAPTER IV.

Examination of Sir W. Hamilton's Distinction of the Infinite and Absolute.

Necessity for the present considerations; the opposition of Hamilton's theory; that thought can only transcend the relative in two ways—This theory is beside the question—The origin of the theory; arrived at by a logical process—The Absolute, whole and part, Hamilton seeks, are in no sense absolute—His use of terms—The Infinite is also the Absolute, and his Absolute is not really such—Hamilton asserts that these two are contradictions; all other philosophers identify them—The term Absolute properly denotes the unrestricted; Hamilton discriminates another Absolute, the completed, perfected, finished—This definition is really not contradictory but inclusive of the Infinite; for completeness is not a specific difference—There is no "Unconditionally Limited," which is a contradiction in terms—We cannot reach, by Hamilton's process, a whole which is not a part of a greater, but by reaching the Infinite; such a whole, so constructed, would not be absolute—We cannot think of an "Absolute part" simply because thought cannot be of nothing: again, "part" is a relative term, and, therefore, there can be no "absolute part"—That which is "completed," must have been incomplete, therefore Hamilton's *Absolute* is an evolution of the *Relative;* Hamilton's Infinite and Absolute are not the boundaries of possible thought—The true Unconditioned or Absolute is unrestricted, but not unrelated; that it is such, is assumed by Hamilton and Mansel—As applied to God, the *Infinite* denotes *illimitation;* the *Absolute*, *independence;* the Unconditioned, both—Mansel's definitions coincident; overturn his own theory—The Infinite, as predicated of God, not quantitative; Mansel frequently evinces a materialistic notion of the Infinite—The Infinite can be regarded as consisting of a limited number of attributes; concerning this, our faith makes no positive declaration; Mansel's illustrations materialistic, and wholly irrelevant—The Deity is not conceivable as "the sum of all reality;" Strictures on Mansel's statements—The Absolute, as absolute, can be a cause; the contrary view combated—The Absolute can exist in relation; God is related, though not the Relative—Because "the finite is out of the Infinite," it does not follow that "the Infinite is conditioned . . . finite"—Conclusion; the soul finds relief in rising from these subtilties of logic to the revelations of Faith, 158

CHAPTER V.

The Characteristics of Knowledge and Thought as bearing on this Subject.

The main strength of the opponents lies in their assertion, that the conditions of knowledge and thought exclude any knowledge of, or thought concerning the Infinite: hence the importance of the present inquiry—I. Knowledge is simple recognition—Its characteristics and conditions are: 1*st*, The conscious relation of the mind with an object: this does not exclude a knowledge of the Infinite, for He can exist in relation: Relativity, as to the mind, simply involves the presentation of an object: as to the object, it does not involve any limitation of it, or influence upon it, etc.—2*d*, Objects recognised by their qualities; in themselves, immediate knowledge; by their effects, mediate: knowledge of the Deity, in both ways—3*d*, Knowledge proportionate to cognitive power: all knowledge is finite: Finite knowledge of the Infinite possible—Examination of Hamilton's criticism of the Author's view—Knowledge not necessarily *complete*—Finite knowledge not necessarily of the Finite—Examination of Mansel's criticism of the Author's illustration: his objections apply to all material illustrations: how these are to be used: there may be a limited knowledge of the Infinite, as of the world: the points of analogy alone to be regarded—Knowledge may be of various degrees: distinguished by Leibnitz—Our knowledge of the Infinite, clear, distinct, but partial and indefinite—Partial, but not of a part: the Hamiltonian view erroneous—Indefinite, but clear and distinct; and must be for ever indefinite, because the Deity is illimitable—The indefinite, purely subjective; the infinite, objective: Hamilton and Mansel, in many instances, lose sight of this fundamental difference: criticism of Mansel's theory—Our knowledge of the Infinite is capable of perpetual development—4*th*, Knowledge either *à priori* or *à posteriori* in its origin—Without the former there could be no knowledge of the Infinite: Hobbes, by his philosophy, shut up to Atheism: Locke, in holding at once that all knowledge comes from experience, and that we have an assurance (necessary belief or cognition) of the Divine existence, is inconsistent: Bishop Browne's analogical theory is equally insufficient—5*th*, *Knowledge by analogy* is *mediate:* Analogy implies *à priori* Knowledge, and a comparison of the resembling objects, consequently Browne's theory involves a *petitio principii:* further, we can judge of the extent of the analogy; Browne's inconsistency; we can decide where it fails; we possess a knowledge of God above the analogical; Browne is forced to bear testimony to this—Concluding remarks—II. *Thought* is comparison—All objects of knowledge may be objects of thought; therefore, the Infinite may be an object of thought—"To think is to condition," only in a *subjective* sense: we do not "think a thing" but *of a thing*, and to think is not to embrace the object of thought: this is a false assumption of the Hamiltonian philosophy: his three positions, *as they should stand;* interpose no obstacle to thought concerning the Infinite—Thought, in its two functions, Comparison and

PAGE

Conception, may be of an object, not under any general notion—(Concerning Relativity of thought, see under Relativity of knowledge)—Important characteristics of thought—1*st*, All things known may be matter of thought: consequently we may think of the Deity—2*d*, The degrees of thought are those of the knowledge of its object: therefore our thought of the Infinite One is clear, distinct, but indefinite—We have an *indefinite conception* of an *Infinite object:* Hamilton's objection considered; Mansel's indefinite; thought is not merely the withdrawal of thought from limits, but may result from the nature of the object—3*d*, All thought is positive: the Hamiltonian doctrine of Negative Thinking considered; unfounded and inconsistent; its bearing on the present discussion—The notion of the Infinite could not arise from negative thinking—God is not "unknown or unknowable;" Religion is "a function of thought"—Our knowledge of God is capable of endless advancement, but not of perfection; God is neither wholly unknown, nor can be wholly known; If we know and can think of the Infinite, we can reason concerning Him: Mansel's theory overturns all Systematic Theology—Hamilton and Mansel's contradictions: if *according to the Hamiltonian theory*, we can have no knowledge of the Infinite, we *never* can: if man, as finite, cannot now know God, he never can: Scripture does not support, as these authors would make appear, the Negative Philosophy, ... 198

CHAPTER VI.

Time and Space.

The necessity for considering Time and Space as related to the present discussion—Time is the consciousness of sequence in our mental states, and involves memory—The mind also perceives *outward* succession, but the consciousness of Time does not thus *arise*—Every mental exercise involves the recognition of Time—There can be no conception of pure Time, for the mind is not conscious of simple succession, but solely of successive mental states—Outward measures of succession—Consciousness of duration arises from our consciousness of personal identity, and is measured by succession; there is also a perception of outward duration—Time is the duration of changing existence—The Infinite is out of Time, because unchangeable, but the successive changes of created existence may be a measure of His duration—It is objected to a knowledge of the Infinite that Time is a *condition* of the mind—The successive changes of consciousness do not exclude a knowledge of the Unchangeable One; the mind can and does recognise enduring, unchanging existence—Divisions of Time are classifications of events according to succession—Time can only be *pro*-gressive, and is accordingly divided into past, present, and future—The present only is real—A regress, though impossible in reality, may be imagined, and in this way, aided by our natural belief, we can form a conception of the Divine duration—So as to the future—Both excursions of thought end indefinitely; we may combine them to form a conception, clear, distinct,

PAGE

but indefinite, of the Eternal One—Summary of the author's views; retractation of his former doctrine—Thought concerning the successive duration of created existence leads up, of necessity, to the Infinite Being—Time not being a separate existence, Hamilton's logical experiments with "whole parts," are inadmissible and nugatory; illustrations of this—That the *present* can only be conceived of as a *negation* is absurd, and contradictory of consciousness—"Time and Space must be excluded from the notion of the Infinite," but this does not prevent our knowledge of Him—Dr. Mansel's objections on this ground examined—1. Succession in consciousness does *not* involve transition or mutation in the objects recognised; 2. Duration does not imply succession—*Space;* the relative distance between objects, and only existent as a relation, being nothing in itself—Its consideration in no way concerns the present discussion—Retractation of position formerly held—Space is "a certain correlation of existence;" this being admitted by Hamilton, overturns as contradictory all speculations concerning it, as "a whole," "an infinite," "an absolute," etc.—The experimental attempt to reach the limits of Space is purely an effort of the imagination, and the "progression" is imaginary—"Time and Space must be excluded from the notion of the Infinite," 299

CHAPTER VII.

The Knowledge of the Infinite as First Cause.

The belief in the Deity as First Cause rises up into consciousness in reflecting on His works; of the same extent in all minds; involves a knowledge capable of development in each—God as Infinite exists, and is known in relation—Hamilton's definition of the Infinite is incompatible with a belief in an Infinite God; as denying *all possible* relation, is not applicable to Him, but to a *mere abstraction*—Cousin's opinion of this theory—It involves a false method of philosophizing: the true method is psychological; an inquiry into the facts of consciousness—What the true theory of causality—Hamilton makes our notion of cause and effect spring from a mental imbecility; we cannot conceive of anything as non-existing at any prior period, though we may think of it as under other forms—Merits of his theory—Objection *1st*, It is possible to think of an object as previously having no existence; illustration—*2d*, There is no recognition of *power* as an element of our notion—*3d*, It wrongly asserts a plurality of causes for *every* effect; results from Hamilton's definition of a cause: contrary to the use of speech, and to our distinct consciousness—*4th*, The causal judgment does not rise only on the presentation of "a new appearance;" illustration;—*5th*, The theory does not account for our necessary belief in a cause for every finite existence, *apart from any immediate change*—*6th*, The effect does not contain the cause (or "causes"); is not "the complement of being" previously making up the "concauses:" the material is not a cause; the efficient, or cause proper, does not exist in the effect; example—*7th*, The theory incomplete, being physical merely: applied to *mental*

PAGE

phenomena, it fails in explication—*8th*, Applied to speculation concerning the *First Cause*, it involves Pantheism—It is not a truthful transcript of consciousness: in thinking of creation, we do not conceive of God evolving the universe out of Himself: the case put; illustrated; Hamilton's objections answered: the universe *is* conceived of as an *addition* to *existence*, though we cannot think how it came into *being:* God as alone existent is conceivable, as Hamilton substantially admits —"Ex nihilo nihil fit," true or false, according to what is implied— *9th*, The theory excludes a First Cause—Hamilton's hypothesis of a First Cause is borrowed; on the contrary, his theory implies an interminable series of causes or evolutions—Further, this theory is falsely based on a mental *weakness*—The author's doctrine of Causality, the one commonly held: viz., That the belief in a cause for every event, is *a first principle* of the mind—The principle of causality is a belief in a cause, not only for every change in existence, but for every finite existence—The only adequate and tenable theory— Hamilton's objections answered: 1. It does *not* necessitate two contradictory deliverances of consciousness—2. It does not imply a denial of Free Will: "*Willing to will*," is not a fact of consciousness—Cousin's theory; that God the First Cause, must act; cannot be vindicated; falls before Hamilton's criticism—Every man is conscious of two primary cognitions or beliefs; every finite existence is caused; secondly, the Deity is uncaused: we cannot think of an *eternal* chain of causes— Examination of consciousness; must believe in some uncaused Origin— If it be said this is a fabrication, the appeal is to consciousness—The existence of a First Cause may be denied, and has been, through abstract speculation, apart from the consideration of facts; as also have some denied the existence of the Universe; in both cases, the man's *living* contradicts and nullifies his theorizing—The existence of the First Cause transcends *proof*, being a natural revelation—Our belief involves that the First Cause is Infinite and Absolute: Mansel, *contrary to his own definitions*, asserts "the Absolute cannot, as such, be a cause:" The relation of the First Cause to the effect is not *necessary*, and therefore not opposed to His Absolute nature—The apparent difficulty in Mansel's question, "How can the Infinite *become* that which it *was not* from the first?" arises from a confusion of language; these considerations of his are irrevelant and perplexing—Belief in a self-existent First Cause implies knowledge—What is the nature of this knowledge: What is our knowledge of a cause?—It is the cognition of those qualities in an object, which involve power to produce the effect: sometimes, when the cause is not recognised, an hypothetical cause is framed from experience—The process by which we are led up to the First Cause— The primary knowledge of the First Cause involved in our necessary beliefs can only be developed through the contemplation of His works, . 336

CHAPTER VIII.

The Knowledge of the Infinite Being as Moral Governor.

PAGE

Man, moral as well as rational: God revealed in man's moral nature; this nature requires a knowledge of God—Cognitions of Right and Wrong are fixed and universal—Utilitarian theory considered; preposterous: happiness cannot be the sole end of life: the Right often counter to our desire of happiness—The true theory founds morality in first principles: the complement of these constitute *Conscience*—The consciousness of responsibility implies a *belief* in, and *knowledge* of, the Supreme Being: we must know Him to whom we are responsible, as a distinct Personality: experience corroborates this—The moral emotions imply the same—On any other hypothesis, these mental phenomena are inexplicable and contradictory—Summary of facts of consciousness: God revealed in Faith as *infinitely and absolutely* holy and just: faith implies knowledge: knowledge supplies materials for a *conception* of the Supreme Moral Ruler; not attained by Mansel's method—Mansel's arguments considered: "word-juggling" on Relativity: Personality not limitation: all our notions of personality not from our own—There is a belief in an Infinite Personality: we have a knowledge of the same: there may be a "conscious self" and not a "thinker"—Mansel's view of our conceptions of personality false: there cannot be a "representative notion" without presentative knowledge—Result of Mansel's speculations; that the Supreme Moral Governor is not revealed as the Infinite, false—Summary—Many questions concerning the Deity unanswerable—Conscience gives us our primary conception of the Deity, . . 388

CHAPTER IX.

The Knowledge of the Infinite Being as the Object of Worship.

Man, by nature, a *religious* being, having feelings of reverence and dependence, these not disproved to be natural because not invariable and absolutely universal—Man's religion may be theoretically denied, but such denial is contrary to the common consciousness of mankind—If this position be true, evidence of this element of human nature will be found in universal history: the inquiry prosecuted; no nation without a religion and some notion of a divinity; images of wood, metal, and stone, only representative; illustrative fact; testimony of Poetry,—of Philosophy—Religion possible only on the basis of intelligence; Prayer the exponent of our Knowledge of the Infinite God—Browne's analogical theory of worship is obviously insufficient; it is the worship of a god of our own making—Knowledge the true ground of worship; many mysteries, however, beyond knowledge; Prayer—Worship is not irrational, as the deniers of positive knowledge must maintain—Contrary to Mansel's doctrine—Religion is a function of thought, because of knowledge; to this all

PAGE

History bears witness; Mansel's inconsistencies—There can be no *religious* consciousness of the finite—The assertion, that God does not answer prayer, *as the Infinite*, unfounded—Conclusion, . . . 419

CHAPTER X.

The Testimony of Scripture concerning Man's Knowledge of the Infinite.

The opposing disputants have naturally turned to the Bible on this question; but have generally erred in collating only such passages as seemed to favour their views—Two classes of Scriptural statements, 1. Concerning a knowledge we have; 2. Concerning truth beyond our knowledge—The author's purpose; difficulties—The Scriptures, a Revelation, not a proof, of the Divine existence—presuppose our Natural Belief in God's Existence—At the same time, they admit men, in the folly of sin, may deny God—What do they reveal? God's Eternity; Immateriality; not to be imaged forth; His Infinitude—Concerning our possible knowledge, the Scriptures teach (1.) that God is Incomprehensible; the word "unsearchable;" the Apostolic prayer for the Ephesian Church shows the *knowledge* of the *Unsearchable One* in harmony with his *Incomprehensibility;* the word "comprehend:" they invariably teach (2.) that man has a knowledge of the Infinite God—The passage (1 Cor. xiii. 9, 10, 12) considered; Hamilton's interpretation erroneous; Scripture does not sanction the possibility of Infinite Knowledge in the future; Dr. Mansel's remarks on the passage, not correct—Bishop Browne's exegesis nearer the truth—Two clauses referring to our present, two to our future knowledge; mutually explanatory—Concerning our present knowledge; it testifies that we *see, see darkly*, and through a glass—Ἐν αἰνίγματι, inadequately: parallel usages—The manner in which we know God; "by means of a mirror," by a reflection, through His works—Ἐκ μέρους, in part, imperfectly: Hamilton's faulty exegesis examined—The passage testifies of our future knowledge; "face to face," directly, and not merely through His works; "even as also I am known"—Two questions: how are we known? and how is God's knowledge of us likened to our future knowledge of Him?—How are we known? parallel passages reviewed; conclusion, We shall know without *moral* hindrance: Hamilton's rendering preposterous—Summary of results; paraphrase of the passage: the Bible does not teach that we shall receive new mental powers or laws, but that the change will be in *circumstances* and in our *moral* nature—Corroborative passages: Old Testament testimonies; Moses' (Deut. iii. 24), Jacob's (Gen. xxviii. 16, 17): Mansel misinterprets it—New Testament testimonies: Paul's at Athens (Acts xvii. 22-3); God known among the heathens (Rom. i. 18-21)—The anthropological analogy of Scripture implies a higher power of cognition; and so, our Lord's parables; illustration—Christians are said to have a special knowledge of God; it is this knowledge that is denied of unbelievers—Summary of Scriptural teaching: barrier to further knowledge, moral—Revelations concerning the future: a fuller manifestation of Divine glory; man

PAGE

perfect, but still finite, and under the same conditions of intelligence—Hamilton's inconsistency on this point; his false exegesis: Mansel's contradictory views; his theory of future knowledge not supported by Scripture—Results of the Hamiltonian Philosophy—Statements of the author's views, ... 437

CHAPTER XI.

Concluding Statement.

Practical bearing of this discussion upon Philosophy and Theology—If the Negative Theory, or "Philosophical Ignorance" theory, be adopted, much hitherto regarded as valuable in the literature of Philosophy and Theology must be abandoned—Psychological consistency of the theory which vindicates a knowledge of the Infinite Being—General argument of Dr. Mansel against the doctrine here maintained; reply—Quotations from Howe in support of author's view; quotations from Bishop Butler in support of the same—Warrant for free and reverent exercise of our powers of knowledge and thought concerning the Infinite Being—The three maxims, previously stated, for the guidance of human inquiry concerning the Infinite, insisted upon—All inquiry must be under the guidance of Faith—The value of the Divine works as illustrations of the Divine glory—Clear deliverance of philosophy from all that violates our necessary belief—Origin and nature of the mysteries in philosophy: some may be solved hereafter, others never can be—Warning against dogmatism in reference to the *apparent* want of harmony between facts known and truth believed—Plea for a reasonable latitude in the exercise of independent thought, if thoroughly subordinated to faith—"The knowable of God"—Prospect before us in the Future World, . . 480

Appendix A, ... 497

Appendix B, ... 512

THE PHILOSOPHY OF THE INFINITE.

CHAPTER I.

STATEMENT OF THE QUESTION.

In the midst of the various efforts of the human intellect, the question is an interesting one,— what are the limits of our powers of thought? We make our observations in reference to the various phenomena presented in the external world, and in the world of mind. We speculate upon the many relations which present themselves around and within us, and we seek to discover what are the laws by which all things are regulated. This is an inquiry natural to the human mind, and one which is prosecuted from an inherent desire to find the explanation of the great system in which we exist. If we look upon the outer world, field after field of observation opens before us; and the objects of our thought increase, till the mind is startled by their magnitude. Still, these objects have boundaries, and all things before us are subject to certain conditions. Let us turn our attention to the world within, and immediately we are

conscious of similar restrictions, though of a kind suited to the special nature of the mental sphere. Starting from a point, the circle of observation may go on enlarging; with vigorous effort the mind may endeavour to embrace the expanding objects of thought; but still it is conscious of limits. Yet, its belief and knowledge rise above the things of matter. While, in the consciousness of the limits of its own power, it looks upon a finite world, it is also conscious of the *belief* in an Infinite Being, who is subject to no restrictive conditions, but is all-perfect in Himself.

Man exists in relation with the Infinite. The fact of his existence, and the end of his being, can be explained only on this admission. The union is indissoluble. Man cannot sever it, even though he would; nor can he, by any effort of the mind, even conceive himself restricted to a relation with what is merely finite. The Infinite, therefore, is a prominent object in thought and feeling; and its recognition has exercised a powerful influence throughout the entire history of the race.

What, then, is the nature of our relation to the Infinite? Upon what ground do we hold the existence of one Infinite Being? What is the nature and extent of our knowledge of the Infinite God? These are the questions which open up the important subject now to be considered. The inquiry thus indicated is the highest to which the mind can aspire. The question is deeply interesting, but, at the same time, it is confessedly the most difficult within the range of philosophical investigation, whether its purpose be to determine the precise limits within which the mind is restricted, or to discover

what knowledge of the Infinite is competent to man, if, indeed, such a knowledge be at all possible. In advancing to such an inquiry, we rise above the limits of this earthly scene; our thoughts venture to approach the presence of that Being, who regulates all things, yet is Himself unrestricted; and we endeavour to obtain *some* knowledge of that God, who can never be *completely* known. The difficulties of the attempt are striking. The mind must be on the stretch; the question is shrouded in mystery; and yet, its very difficulty nerves us to the attempt,—its very mystery allures us onwards in the inquiry. Man desires to know something of the Infinite. He longs to trace his relation to the Supreme, to contemplate his connexion with the Omnipotent, to meditate on the attributes of the Divine Being, till he is lost in their infinitude. He feels rising within him the increasing and unquenchable desire to know more of that God, and he often passes away in imagination to that eternity, throughout which the desire of his heart will continue to be gratified.

On the very threshold of this inquiry, we are met by such questions as these:—Can we have any certainty of the existence of an Infinite Being? And if we have the conviction of his existence, can we pass from the region of simple *belief*, and obtain a *knowledge* of the Infinite One? Can we have any knowledge of a God, Infinite in all his attributes?

The moment the first of these questions is raised, we are hurried into the arena of strife, and find ourselves among a host of combatants. In surveying the position, a most singular conflict is seen. There are two parties

ranged against each other. But, on both sides, each individual combatant is engaging in the strife according to his individual inclination. On the one hand, there are arguments *à priori*, and arguments *à posteriori*, to establish the existence of one Supreme Being; and, on the other, there are the enemies of that truth, seizing upon the weapons of its friends, and with these seeking to gain the victory.

Passing from the primary question concerning the *existence* of one Supreme Being, we come to the questions regarding the possibility of a *knowledge* of the Infinite God. Here again we are in disputed territory, where it is impossible for us to reach any conclusion except in the face of opposition. We are vigorously assailed with questions concerning the powers of our mind, the nature of the Infinite, and the possibility of it becoming the object of thought. In endeavouring to answer those which refer to our *knowledge* of the Infinite, it may seem that the decision of the judgment is at variance with the deliverance of consciousness; that there is a want of harmony between the logical and psychological aspects of the matter. If the question were presented,—have we any notion of the Infinite, or rather, have we any notion of an Infinite Deity?—the immediate deliverance of our consciousness would be, that we have, and that our notion of the Deity is not a mere negation of a finite creation, but something positive. If, however, the question were presented for determination by the judgment,—can the finite embrace the Infinite? the answer would as readily come forth that the thing is impossible. On the one hand, we should be

ready to answer, that we have a positive conception of the Infinite Being; and, on the other, we should as readily reply, that the Infinite cannot be embraced by the finite. In a psychological point of view, we might answer the question in the affirmative; in a logical point of view, we might answer in the negative. Is there, then, any discrepancy in these decisions? Or, are these different results obtained by viewing the question in different aspects? Is there a common point of observation from which both may be seen to harmonize? When we examine consciousness, do we find that we have a notion of the Infinite, though not an adequate conception, such as is obtained by embracing an object? And when we view it in a logical aspect, do we find that our decision only involves the conclusion, that we cannot embrace the Infinite in all its extent? If so, then the two positions are perfectly compatible.

These questions, however, have not been raised for the purpose of giving them immediate attention, but simply with the view of bringing the subject more clearly before the mind of the reader, and revealing some of the points which require careful consideration. The question is viewed in an aspect purely philosophical, requiring that its determination be based upon the deliverance of consciousness, and be in accordance with the conditions which regulate human thought.

The speculations of philosophers on this question have been various, and strongly conflicting. Some have asserted that a knowledge of the Infinite is possible, while others have resolutely maintained that it is entirely beyond the reach of human intelligence. Those who

have admitted to man a knowledge of the Infinite, have adopted very different theories to account for its origin. Sir William Hamilton has given "a statement of the opinions which may be entertained regarding the Unconditioned, as an immediate object of knowledge and of thought," which may be quoted, as presenting the matter with all the precision for which that philosopher is so distinguished.[1] He says:—"These opinions may be reduced to *four*,—1*st*, The Unconditioned is incognisable and inconceivable; its notion being only negative of the conditioned, which last can alone be positively known or conceived. 2*d*, It is not an object of knowledge; but its notion, as a regulative principle of the mind itself, is more than a mere negation of the conditioned. 3*d*, It is cognisable, but not conceivable; it can be known by a sinking back into identity with the Absolute, but it is incomprehensible by consciousness and reflection, which are only of the relative and the different. 4*th*, It is cognisable and conceivable by consciousness and reflection, under relation, difference, and plurality."[2]

The *first* is the opinion maintained by Sir William Hamilton himself; the *second* is that adopted by Kant; the *third* is the doctrine of Schelling; and the *fourth* is that of M. Cousin.

The opinions of Sir William Hamilton and M. Cousin are those which are received at the present day, and divide philosophers generally. It will therefore be neces-

[1] For the sake of any reader who may be unacquainted with the nomenclature of the question under discussion, it may be remarked that the terms *Infinite*, *Absolute*, and *Unconditioned*, are synonymous, and are used to designate what is subject to no conditions, limits, or restrictions. The terms will be fully discussed hereafter, and Sir William Hamilton's definition of them considered.

[2] Sir William Hamilton's *Discussions on Philosophy*, p. 12.

sary, in the prosecution of the argument, to consider specially the opinions maintained by these two philosophers. In the meantime, a few remarks must suffice regarding the other two theories, which have been more generally set aside.

Kant attributes to man the power of reason in two different relations; the one is *speculative reason*, the other *practical reason*, and the principles of both are adopted and applied by the judgment. Speculative reason is conversant with what man *can know;* practical reason, with what man *ought to do.* According to Kant, speculative reason does not give to man a knowledge of the Infinite God, but on the contrary, expressly involves the impossibility of such knowledge. On the other hand, he asserts that practical reason gives to man the recognition of God, as a necessary postulate for proper moral action. Reason, therefore, according to Kant, both denies to man the possibility of any knowledge of God, and, at the same time, affords to him a knowledge of God. On the one hand, it expressly affirms the impossibility of any conception; and, on the other, palms upon man a certain fiction, under the name of a conception of the Infinite God. The latter it does, not because the existence of an Infinite Being is an absolute truth, but for the very philosophical reason, that such a conviction is necessary in order that man may exist as a moral being. Know, then, O man! that thy reason affords thee the recognition of an Infinite Being, only as a *regulative principle* of thy life. Who placed that principle there, reason doth not affirm, and it is no business of thine to inquire! No wonder that when Kant proclaimed such a doctrine he

failed in gaining general assent to it. There are few who will become so far the dupes of their own abstractions, as to condescend to speak of "the notion of a supreme Being," as "in many respects *a very useful idea.*" The theory of Kant manifestly destroys itself, and in its nature tends to the destruction both of philosophy and religion. To make the statements of reason contradictory, is to prove it deceitful, and, consequently, is to overturn the basis upon which a sound philosophy rests. It is to assert that God has given us a power which deceives us, and consequently, to shake the confidence of that faith in God, which is the foundation of true religion. The doctrine of Kant must, therefore, be set aside as inconsistent with itself, and consequently untenable.

The doctrine of Schelling is, that we obtain our knowledge of the Infinite by sinking back into a state beyond consciousness, in which we are identified in being with the Absolute, and thus rise to a knowledge of it. It is difficult to say whether the presumption or the absurdity of this theory affords the greater cause for astonishment. To retire from consciousness, and constitute one's self a part of the one Absolute Being, is venturing to a degree of presumption happily not very common. Viewed as a philosophical theory it is baseless. If Schelling thought fit to trust that he had obtained a knowledge of the Absolute, while he was not in a state of consciousness,—if he was contented to believe that he had received a knowledge of the Infinite, which could not be retained on returning to a state of consciousness, it is not at all probable that he shall obtain many sup-

porters. Men are not accustomed to assert that they possess a knowledge of which they are not conscious. Nor need it cause much concern how Schelling passed from the finite to the Infinite ; or, being once Infinite, how he again returned to the finite, since this important matter cannot be made known. This, at least, seems inconceivable.

Setting aside the theories of Kant and Schelling, there remain only those of Sir William Hamilton and M. Cousin : Sir William asserting that we can have no positive knowledge of the Unconditioned, its only notion being a negation of the Conditioned ; M. Cousin asserting that we have a knowledge of the Infinite by relation, difference, and plurality. Sir W. Hamilton's theory very clearly bears traces of the influence of Kant ; and that of M. Cousin as clearly shows the influence of Schelling. As an explanation of the forms which their respective theories bear, I should say that Sir W. Hamilton has more truly set himself to devise a theory which should retain all that is valuable, and avoid all that is weak, in Kant's doctrines ; and that M. Cousin has more truly attempted to reach Schelling's conclusion, while avoiding his inconsistencies ; than either of them has set himself, without prejudice, to an adequate interpretation of the facts of consciousness.

In reference to the discussion raised by these conflicting theories, Dr. Morell says,—" Here we have three minds standing severally at the head of the respective philosophies of Britain, France, and Germany, assuming each a different hypothesis on this subject, while Kant, the Aristotle of the modern world, assumes a fourth.

Under such circumstances, he must be a bold thinker who ventures to pronounce confidently upon the truth or error of any one of these opinions."[1] I lay no claim to the character of a bold thinker,—I certainly desire that my thinking should be characterized by all caution and humility ; at the same time, fidelity to recognised truth demands earnestness in maintaining it. I have no wish "to pronounce confidently" upon a subject so difficult. The following observations are presented as a contribution to the Philosophy of the Infinite, and if they tend in the slightest degree to elucidate the subject, and instigate to its further study, they shall have gained their end, though the result of the study thus increased should leave them far behind.

In entering upon a subject so difficult, I am conscious not only of feelings of diffidence, but of regret that I am constrained to take up a position opposed to that of Sir William Hamilton. Let me at once confess, that this fact, on the one hand, causes me the deepest regret ; and, on the other, strongly convinces me of the necessity for taking the step. Respected and admired as Sir William has been, and possessing, as I rejoice to acknowledge, the very highest claims to such esteem, I cannot but regard it as unfortunate that he has propounded a doctrine concerning the Infinite so startling and hazardous. It is to be regretted that the influence of the first philosopher of the present day, should be given so strongly to maintain the doctrine that we can have no knowledge of the Infinite. And when there is an oft-repeated admission that the arguments of Sir W. Hamilton on this question

[1] *History of Modern Philosophy*, II. 504, second edition.

are unanswerable; when there is from others, only the feeble expression of a doubt that there may be error somewhere; and when some are found taking up an opposite doctrine, without being able to give a sufficient reason; it is obvious that there is room for further investigation, and the importance of the question demands that such investigation be careful and minute.

As a specimen of the manner in which the doctrine of Hamilton has been received by many, the following quotation from Dr. Morell may be given. Considering the article on the Infinite as it first appeared in the *Edinburgh Review*, he makes the following observations: —"We freely confess that we are not yet prepared to combat, step by step, the weighty arguments by which the Scottish metaphysician seeks to establish the negative character of this great fundamental conception; neither, on the other hand, are we prepared to admit his inference. We cannot divest our mind of the belief, that there is something *positive* in the glance which the human soul casts upon the world of eternity and infinity."[1] This statement is made by Dr. Morell in the first edition of his *History of Philosophy*, and again repeated in the second edition, and it is only a specimen of what has been commonly felt and expressed on the point. I confess to great uneasiness in reference to the conclusion at which Sir William Hamilton has arrived,—that man can have no knowledge of the Infinite God. It is mainly to test the validity of this conclusion that I have entered upon a strict examination of the arguments adduced.

In order to accomplish my purpose, it is of the utmost

[1] *History of Modern Philosophy*, II. 504, second edition.

consequence in this preliminary chapter to present a clear statement of the question here brought under review, and of the nature of the discussion essential for its satisfactory solution. In attempting this, I shall endeavour to give a careful and comprehensive representation of the conflicting opinions of Sir W. Hamilton and M. Cousin, with due regard to their most recent expressions of opinion, and thereafter, I shall indicate shortly the doctrine maintained in these pages. The trustworthiness of the following criticisms must depend upon a faithful account of the respective opinions of the two great champions who come into conflict concerning the possibility of any knowledge of the Infinite Being. In so far as the doctrine of Sir W. Hamilton is concerned, the need has become more urgent, since, in the letter which he was kind enough to address to me in reply to my arguments, and which is now published along with his Metaphysical Lectures,[1] he expresses his regret that his doctrines have been "so much mistaken." As in that letter he has been candid enough to state in what respects I have mistaken his doctrines, I shall allude to the points in proceeding.

At the very outset here, it is necessary to observe, that Sir W. Hamilton and M. Cousin agree in affirming that we have a *necessary belief* in the *existence* of the One Infinite God. The statement of this fact is, for the present, sufficient; the value of the admission in connexion with this discussion shall hereafter appear.

Passing, then, from the region of *faith*, to that of *knowledge*, the real question in dispute arises,—"Can

[1] *Lectures*, II. 530-535.

we have any knowledge of the *Infinite Being?*" To this question Sir W. Hamilton answers most emphatically in the negative. As accuracy here is of so much moment, the reader will accept a somewhat extended quotation of his own language. He says:—"The mind can conceive, and consequently can know, only *the limited, and the conditionally* limited. The unconditionally unlimited, or *the Infinite*, the unconditionally limited, or the *Absolute*, cannot positively be construed to the mind; they can be conceived only by a thinking away from, or abstraction of, those very conditions under which thought itself is realized; consequently the notion of the unconditioned is only *negative*,—negative of the conceivable itself."[1] Here there is the distinct assertion that the mind "can know only the limited," and therefore cannot know the Infinite; but at the same time, it is affirmed that the mind has a "negative notion" of the Infinite, which is declared to be negative of the conceivable itself. In the Lectures on Metaphysics, he says,—"We must believe in the Infinity of God; but the Infinite God cannot by us, in the present limitation of our faculties, be comprehended or conceived."[2] More briefly, in his letter to me, he has said, "I deny that the Infinite can by us be *known*."[3] This doctrine has been fully accepted by Dr. Mansel in his work on the "Limits of Religious Thought." How truly he has accepted the doctrine of Hamilton, may appear from such statements as these:—"The Infinite, from a human point of view, is merely a name for the absence of those conditions under which thought is pos-

[1] *Discussions*, p. 13.
[2] *Lectures on Metaphysics*, II. 374.
[3] *Lectures on Metaphysics*, II. 530.

sible :"[1] and again,—The "*Absolute* and the *Infinite* are, like the *Inconceivable* and the *Imperceptible*, names indicating not an object of thought, or of consciousness at all, but the mere absence of the conditions under which consciousness is possible."[2] Here, then, the Infinite is declared to be nothing better than the Inconceivable. As Dr. Mansel has appeared as the avowed vindicator of Hamilton's theory, I shall take frequent occasion to refer to the views which he has expressed on the question here under discussion.

The quotations just given indicate the ground on which the impossibility of our knowledge of the Infinite Being is asserted. Such a knowledge is declared inconsistent with the conditions of human thought. The following passage is sufficient to explain the basis on which this assertion rests :—"Thought cannot transcend consciousness : consciousness is only possible under the antithesis of a subject and an object of thought, known only in correlation, and mutually limiting each other ; while, independently of all this, all that we know, either of subject or object, either of mind or matter, is only a knowledge in each of the particular, of the plural, of the different, of the phenomenal."[3] Such, then, is the basis on which Sir W. Hamilton rests the assertion that the Infinite cannot be known ; and, as the purpose of this preliminary statement is exposition, not criticism, I content myself with presenting the above as a fair and full declaration of his theory. He enumerates the *conditions of thought*, and thence deduces the startling conclusion, that all *knowledge of the Infinite Being* is impossible.

[1] *Limits of Religious Thought*, second edition, p. 72.
[2] *Ibid.* p. 95. [3] *Discussions*, p. 14.

Here, however, it is necessary to consider the *first* of those points on which it is alleged I have made a mistake in representing this doctrine. I give the passage at full length. He says:—"I do not think that you have taken sufficiently into account, that the Infinite which I contemplate is considered only as *in thought;* the Infinite beyond thought being, it may be, an object of belief, but not of knowledge. This consideration obviates many of your objections."[1] This is to me a most surprising position from which to attempt to turn aside my criticisms. According to this, all that he intended to affirm and defend was, that we cannot have *infinite thought*, and therefore we can have no thought about the Infinite Being; in other words, there can be no Infinite *in thought*, therefore the Infinite God cannot be an object of thought. In reply to this mode of defence, I grant at once that Sir W. Hamilton has maintained and vindicated the assertion that there can be no Infinite *in thought;* but I undertake to prove that he has not restricted himself to this point, and that the discussion cannot be thus restricted.

This is a vital point in the controversy, and, in fact, affects the very nature of the discussion itself. There is, therefore, need for being somewhat particular here. Sir W. Hamilton's defence is this,—"The Infinite which I contemplate is considered only as *in thought.*" If this be all, the discussion is at an end, and there can be no need for writing six sentences on the subject, because no one ever asserted that human thought could in any case extend to such a measure as to become *infinite thought.*

[1] *Lectures on Metaphysics*, II. 530.

No one ever dreamed of such a thing. If those who deny to man all knowledge of God, mean to affirm nothing more than the impossibility of the finite mind exercising infinite thought, or embracing the Infinite Being within its own consciousness, they might have saved the world the discussion which they have raised. If this be all that is meant, the plainest man may well scorn the metaphysical subtleties which have been uttered in connexion with such a self-evident proposition, and cast them aside as completely worthless. Where in the "statement of opinions which may be entertained regarding the unconditioned (absolute and infinite) as an immediate object of knowledge and of thought," which Sir W. Hamilton has himself drawn up,[1] could he have found the declaration with which he professes exclusively to have entered into conflict, *that the finite mind is capable of infinite thought?* Not in Kant's theory, for he affirms that the Infinite is not an object of knowledge at all; not in the theory of Schelling, for he declares that in order to know the Infinite, we must rise *above* thought, yea, above consciousness itself, and become one with the Absolute; not in Cousin's doctrines, for his whole theory is counter to such a supposition. Sir W. Hamilton has expressly stated it as M. Cousin's theory that the Infinite is "cognisable and conceivable *by consciousness and reflection, under relation, difference, and plurality.*" If we turn to Cousin himself, we find him saying, "Reason is in man, yet it comes from God. Hence it is individual and *finite*, while its root is in the Infinite."[2] It

[1] *Discussions*, p. 12.

[2] *The True, the Beautiful, and the Good*, Wight's Translation, p. 107.

is this *finite* reason which he speaks of rising "from the visible to the invisible, from the finite to the Infinite." He condemns with the utmost severity the theory which would suppose that the mind does not know God, "if it knows him only in his manifestations and by the signs of his existence," and which says that, in order to know him "it must know him directly," in fact, must be "united to him!" There can certainly be no dispute about the fact, that the existence of infinite thought in a finite mind must be a violation of all the laws of human thought. If any man is inclined, however, he may write down the proposition which every man denies, either in the abstract form, The finite may embrace the Infinite; or in the concrete, The finite mind may embrace the Infinite Deity, and from that as a fundamental postulate, he may legitimately deduce any number of contradictions he pleases. This is an exercise in which Dr. Mansel specially delights,[1] though to what purpose, it seems impossible to determine.

But further, Sir W. Hamilton, so far from restricting himself to the needless assertion, that the Infinite cannot exist in thought, is constantly transcending it, and advancing to a very different assertion, which really raises the question in dispute, that is, the impossibility of any *limited knowledge* of the Infinite God. He cannot *define* the Infinite, without passing to the consideration of an object really existent apart from the mind; and he cannot proceed to reason about it, without annihilating his own defence. He does, indeed, at times, endeavour to give an explanation of the use of the word Infinite, which

[1] *Limits of Religious Thought*, pp. 49, 50, 58, 59, *et passim*.

applies only because it is impossible for the mind to have infinite thought. Thus he says,—"The Infinite and Absolute are only the names of two counter *imbecilities* of the human mind:"[1] and so Dr. Mansel says,—"The Infinite is merely a name for the absence of those conditions under which thought is possible."[2] But both authors soon transcend this view of the Infinite, whenever they begin to reason. Hamilton no longer speaks of the Absolute and Infinite as mere "imbecilities" of the human mind, but now he affirms that one of these "must be admitted as *necessary*,"[3] that is, our "imbecility" must have a necessary existence. In proceeding to criticise M. Cousin, he is found boldly declaring what the Absolute *must be*,[4] and arguing that the Absolute "*as known*," must be different from the Absolute "*as existing*." Nay more, both in the *Discussions* and in the *Lectures*, he considers the possibility of our knowledge of the *Deity*, and here I suppose it will be confessed that there is a reference to something more than to the Infinite, "considered only as in thought." And finally, to put the matter beyond all dispute, in the letter which he has addressed to me combating my views, he says,—"Nothing can be more self-repugnant than the assertion that we know the Infinite through a finite notion, or have a finite knowledge of an infinite object of knowledge." Here, then, is something entirely different from the infinite considered only as in thought, — here is the assertion that the Infinite, *as existing*, cannot be the object of human knowledge. This is the true

[1] *Discussions*, p. 21.
[2] *Limits of Religious Thought*, p. 72.
[3] *Discussions*, p. 15.
[4] *Ibid.* p. 33.

question under discussion. Sir W. Hamilton has maintained that a finite knowledge of the Divine Being is impossible: I maintain that such a knowledge is a fact in consciousness.

The discussion concerning the Philosophy of the Infinite cannot be restricted to the question whether the finite mind can be possessed of infinite thought. Sir W Hamilton has not succeeded in restricting it thus, and still less has Dr. Mansel. The discussion really involves such questions as these:—Can we have any knowledge of that God in whose existence we necessarily believe? Can we form intelligent views concerning the nature and government of the Infinite Being—views which shall satisfy our mind of the surpassing glory of his nature, and the perfect justice of his government? Or, can we only repeat certain propositions, saying that we believe them to be true, while we can never understand what they mean, nor draw a single inference from them? What Hamilton says, in answer to this inquiry, is clear enough from the last quotation. His theory affirms,—1st, that man cannot have infinite knowledge; and 2d, that man cannot have a finite knowledge of the Infinite God. The former, nobody denies; the latter, and only important part of the theory, is controverted in these pages.

It is now time to proceed to a statement of M. Cousin's theory, which is the only one in Hamilton's enumeration of the different views on this subject that involves a positive knowledge of the Divine Being. I am far from acknowledging Cousin as the representative of all who resist the doctrine that the Infinite is incognisable, yet I consider that the balance of truth is to be found with

the French philosopher, when he affirms a positive knowledge of the Deity. As the apostle of Eclecticism, indeed, he has failed in his great purpose, and men remain as much persuaded as ever, that to travel through the various systems of philosophy, and gather out of each the modicum of truth which they seem to possess, in order to construct an Eclectic system out of the accumulated mass, is not the true method of philosophizing. Passing this, however, let me state his doctrine concerning the Infinite, with which alone I am at present concerned. He agrees with the theory already explained, in acknowledging that "an act of thought is only possible where there exists a plurality of terms." At the same time, he affirms that our notion of the finite gives us also the notion of the Infinite. We cannot know the one without the other; they are necessarily related *in thought*, as well as *in existence*. His theory therefore is, as Sir W. Hamilton has stated, that the Infinite is "cognisable and conceivable by consciousness and reflection, under relation, difference, and plurality." While, however, he is found contending for what seems to me the true side of the question, he is an unsafe defender of it. I do not think that he has strictly confined himself to a delineation of consciousness. On the contrary, he has encumbered the doctrine with matter altogether untenable, and has thus laid it open to assault, so that, at a cursory glance, it might seem that even the citadel itself had been considerably shaken. I admire the great central truth in the philosophy of M. Cousin, but I regard various points, which he has made to cluster around it, as so many outposts, worse than useless, which ought to fall to atoms,

and which have so fallen under the effective assaults of the Scottish metaphysician.

In endeavouring to establish that we have a knowledge of the Divine Being, he turns to the fundamental principles of truth and morality, implanted in the mental nature, and because they are not subject to our will—because they are given to us, and not gained by us—because they belong necessarily to all men—he declares reason *impersonal*, and in a certain sense *divine*. This doctrine of the impersonality of human reason I utterly repudiate. It is but justice to M. Cousin, however, to say, that this is only a partial view of his theory; for he does not shut himself up to only one line, by which to obtain a knowledge of the Infinite. Take, for example, the following as a general statement: "We do not perceive God, but we conceive him, upon the faith of this admirable world exposed to our view, and upon that of this other world, more admirable still, which we bear in ourselves. By this double road we succeed in going to God."[1] He does not assert such a doctrine as the existence of an Infinite in thought; he does not affirm that we are able to comprehend the Infinite. In contradiction of such a view he says: "In order absolutely to comprehend the Infinite, it is necessary to have an infinite power of comprehension, and that is not granted to us. God, in manifesting himself, retains something in himself which nothing finite can absolutely manifest; consequently, it is not permitted us to comprehend absolutely." I would remark further, that when M. Cousin passes from our knowledge to speak of the Divine nature, he often

[1] *The True, Beautiful, and Good*, p. 109.

ventures beyond what the extent of our knowledge warrants, as when he subjects the Divine intelligence to the same conditions as human intelligence, and when he defines the Absolute in such a way as to imply that God must create. These are points in his theory which seem to me untenable. While, therefore, I uphold the central doctrine in the system of M. Cousin, it will at the same time be seen that I differ from him so very much as to make the theory here presented quite distinct.

Having now given an exposition of the views of Sir W. Hamilton and M. Cousin, in such a manner, I hope, as to do justice to both, it now remains for me briefly to indicate what seems to me the truth on this great problem in philosophy. In doing this, it will be necessary, for the sake of maintaining clearness throughout, as well as meeting adverse criticism, to state what I do *not* hold, as well as what I positively affirm. And here the reader will expect nothing more than the statement of opinions, the vindication and elucidation of which are left for subsequent parts of the work.

In this, as in every other philosophical question, the inquiry is restricted exclusively to an examination of *consciousness.* This is the sphere of all research; and, in examining consciousness, our duty is to state all the facts found there, bearing on the matter before us, and to refrain from any assertion which cannot be vindicated by an appeal to this tribunal. I hold, therefore, that if a knowledge of the Infinite be possible, it must be attained in harmony with all the necessary conditions of our consciousness. What these conditions are is a matter of comparative agreement among philosophers. Knowledge

in all its forms, as embraced within consciousness, implies the conscious relation of the mind with the object of thought, and the recognition of that object according to the laws of mind. "Whatever we know, or endeavour to know—God or the world, mind or matter, the distant or the near—we know and can know, only in so far as we possess a faculty of knowledge in general; and we can only exercise that faculty under the laws which control and limit its operations."[1] In declaring, therefore, that we have a knowledge of the Infinite God, I assert that such a knowledge is attained in harmony with the conditions of our knowledge, and not "on the daring, the extravagant, the paradoxical supposition, either that Human Reason is identical with the Divine, or that Man and the Absolute are one."[2] Whatever knowledge we have must be within consciousness, and this determines the *sphere* within which all our examination must be conducted.

In thus determining the sphere of examination, the *method* of research is also fixed. The question concerning the possibility of a knowledge of the Infinite must be settled by a careful analysis of consciousness. If, on the one hand, it be asserted that we have a knowledge of the Infinite Being; and if, on the other, such a knowledge be denied, the appeal must be to our consciousness, and to that alone. In every such reference the result can be satisfactory only on these conditions, that everything is stated which consciousness reveals, and that nothing is affirmed which consciousness does not warrant. If the facts of consciousness are not *fully* recorded, the answer

[1] Hamilton's *Lectures on Metaphysics*, I. 61. [2] *Ibid.* II. 375.

is *defective.* It may be true and trustworthy so far as it goes, but it is only partial. If assertions are made which have no verification in consciousness, the answer is thus far *erroneous.* The method of inquiry, then, is nothing more than a careful interpretation of consciousness. This method Sir W. Hamilton has not followed, and therefore his theory is, as it seems to me, in many of its parts, a misrepresentation of consciousness.

I shall now give a brief outline of what appear to me to be the facts of consciousness bearing upon this discussion. I hold that there is in the mind a *necessary belief* in the existence of one Infinite Being. The consciousness of our own existence and the recognition of finite objects, give the occasion for bringing this belief into actual consciousness. If we seek an explanation of our own being, or that of the objects around us, we are forced upward till we rest in our faith in the Divine existence. This faith in one infinite all-perfect Being accordingly becomes the regulating principle in the whole current of our *thought;* in other words, our thought concerning this great Being, and the works of his hand, is determined by the faith which we find implanted in our nature. The *object of faith* becomes in some sense the *object of our knowledge and thought,* that is, in so far as our limited knowledge and thoughts can be engaged with such an object. Our faith in God's existence necessarily implies a certain knowledge of God as existing, for, in truth, all faith implies knowledge. Our necessary conviction involves a certain necessary cognition. It further exercises a regulative authority over all our reflections concerning the dependence of the

creatures on the Creator. The theory here maintained, therefore, is, that, as we have a necessary *belief* in the Divine existence, so we have a necessary, fundamental, or original *knowledge* of his nature, which knowledge is brought into consciousness, and unfolded there, according to the requirements of personal observation and reflection upon the revelation which God has made of himself in his works. Further, as we have a knowledge of the Infinite Being, our understanding may be engaged on the elements of our cognition, and we may form for ourselves a conception of the Infinite One, both clear and distinct, yet felt to be inadequate, though trustworthy in its nature, because resting on the authority of a belief native to the mind. To know the Infinite in all its extent, must at all times be an impossibility. To assert that the finite could embrace the Infinite, is an absurdity too glaring to bear a moment's reflection. But a partial and ever-extending knowledge of God is possible for man. Such is an outline of the theory to be unfolded and vindicated in these pages.

For the purpose of obviating mistakes, it is necessary to indicate some points not involved in the theory here maintained, which have been otherwise asserted, or severely criticised. I do *not* assert that our knowledge of the Infinite is obtained by commencing with a finite object, and gradually enlarging in imagination until we reach the Infinite. Such a theory would involve a two-fold error, that a finite object could be enlarged till it became Infinite, and that the Infinite can be the object of imagination; both of which I deny. The Infinite, as an object of knowledge and of thought, is entirely

shut out from the sphere of imagination, for there can be no *image* of the Infinite. I deny the possibility of rising from the recognition of a finite object, till the object contemplated, or the thought exercised, become infinite. "Departing from the particular, we admit," says Sir W. Hamilton, "that we can never in our highest generalizations, rise above the Finite."[1] This I firmly believe; but it is certainly a great mistake, if it be considered that this shuts us out from all knowledge of the Infinite. Further, I do *not* "regard the notion of the Unconditioned as a positive and real knowledge of existence *in its all-comprehensive unity.*"[2] If M. Cousin ever held this as a part of his theory, which however I question, it has no vindication here; but, on the other hand, I equally deny Sir W. Hamilton's assertion, that the "Absolute can only be known, if *adequately* known." And finally, by way of disclaimer, when Sir W. Hamilton says,—"It has been held that the Infinite is known or conceived, though only *a part* of it can be apprehended,"[3] his remark does not apply to anything which is to be found in my statements. I hold that the Infinite Being as known by us is one and indivisible, and though our knowledge of him is only partial, it is not attained by the apprehension of a part of his nature.

With the convictions just stated in outline, it is clear that I am shut up to oppose the theory of Sir W. Hamilton. He has first laid down what he considers the conditions of thought, and though I am inclined to agree with his statement as a whole, I think he has indicated restrictions which do not belong to thought at all.

[1] *Discussions*, p. 15. [2] *Ibid.* p. 29. [3] *Lectures*, II. p. 375.

Having stated these conditions of thought, he next passes away from the sphere of all reality, and enunciates what he declares to be the true definition of the Unconditioned (though any one might well ask how *he* discovered it), and then he affirms that the recognition of this Unconditioned is quite impossible in harmony with the laws of thought. It is possible to confine us by an hypothesis to an extent much greater than we are in reality restricted; it is possible to raise barriers which may seem to establish the impossibility of our obtaining or possessing any knowledge of what we can know; nay, of what we do know. This I consider Sir William Hamilton has done in asserting the impossibility of any knowledge of the Divine Being. Instead of searching consciousness in order to determine whether we have any knowledge of God, he has passed by the facts of consciousness altogether; and instead of presenting a view of the Deity as revealed to us, he has laid down a most gratuitous definition of the alleged nature of the Unconditioned, for which there is not the least authority either in thought or in existence. In treating of the Infinite, he has dealt with a mere *abstraction* for the knowledge of which no one contends, which does not even exist, and by arguments, which are sufficiently valid as applied to the abstraction which he has himself enunciated, he has seemed to establish the impossibility of our obtaining any knowledge of the Infinite.

Dr. Mansel has done more than follow Sir W. Hamilton. Both have lost themselves in a sea of abstractions, but Dr. Mansel, steering the ship which Sir W. Hamilton had previously piloted, has drifted farther from his

reckonings than his master did before him. He has found it a hard thing to reconcile his wayward course with the chart which he has acknowledged as the true guide. Man can have no knowledge of the infinite God! How strange a doctrine to reconcile with Bible teaching! I am most strongly convinced that there is dangerous error in the course which Sir W. Hamilton has pursued, and Dr. Mansel has so boldly vindicated. With the utmost earnestness, therefore, I address myself to the task of proving that the *Infinite* is a word unspeakably more precious in its significance to man than the *Inconceivable;*[1] that we are not compelled to go through life using nothing but *unmeaning terms*, when we speak of an Infinite God ; that human consciousness does not oscillate between counter "imbecilities," but involves a certain knowledge of the God whom we adore ; and that we are capable of advancing indefinitely in that knowledge, and thereby glorifying the Deity the more.

[1] Mansel's *Limits of Religious Thought*, p. 95.

CHAPTER II.

BELIEF IN THE EXISTENCE OF ONE INFINITE BEING.

Before proceeding to discuss the question concerning the possibility of obtaining a knowledge of an Infinite Being, it is necessary to determine the authority upon which the existence of such a Being is asserted. The inquiry here raised clearly supposes that there is a Being of infinite and absolute perfection, for it were folly to talk of the knowledge of an object which has no existence; and if it be granted that there is an all-perfect Deity, it must be a matter of no small consequence, in conducting the present discussion, to discover the *evidence* upon which the admission is made, because such evidence must have a very important bearing on the possibility or impossibility of obtaining a knowledge of his infinite attributes. Besides, in employing the one method already indicated for the guidance of the entire examination, namely, a careful and complete analysis of *consciousness*, the question which concerns our belief in the existence of the Deity is the one which comes logically first for decision. "In the order of nature," says Sir W. Hamilton, "belief always precedes knowledge;"[1] that is to say, knowledge has in each par-

[1] *Lectures on Metaphysics*, I. p. 44.

ticular instance faith as its basis, and all human knowledge finds its resting-place on necessary belief. In endeavouring to determine, then, whether human thought is concerned with the Infinite, it has first to be decided whether man has faith in the existence of one Infinite God, and if so, on what ground the conviction is held.

As intelligent beings, we are conscious of the recognition of two different classes of phenomena, the one belonging to an external world, *with which we are connected;* the other, belonging to the internal world of mind, *in which we are conscious of our personal existence*, and where all thoughts, feelings, and desires are regarded as our own. There is, therefore, in consciousness, a clear and unmistakable classification of the facts recognised, which every man necessarily adopts in the very exercise of his being, and which cannot be denied without a denial of the truth of consciousness on which every man acts. We are all conscious of the recognition of certain phenomena which are without us, that is, which do not belong to our own being, but to an external world; and, on the other hand, we are conscious of certain phenomena which do belong to our own being,—mental modifications which we call our own. This is the distinction between *self* and *not-self*, which is unmistakably the first distinction involved in consciousness. Within this sphere, Scepticism is impossible, since it destroys itself in utterance, and contradicts itself in action. The man who doubts consciousness, at the same time trusts consciousness in declaring his doubt, and thereby prevents the need for any one contending with him. And besides, every attempted explanation of the

present state of existence fails, which either overlooks or contradicts one or other of these classes of facts, such as the Idealism, which blots out matter from existence, and affirms that mind is the only reality ; or the Materialism, which takes its revenge by destroying mind entirely, and declaring that nothing save matter has any real existence. Idealism and Materialism are each partial Scepticism, which it is impossible to vindicate. The facts of consciousness, involving the recognition of an external world and an internal,— of material and mental existence, cannot be controverted.

Finding, therefore, these facts in consciousness, the mind seeks an explanation of existence, both external and internal, as recognised by itself. Look, then, at the facts requiring to be explained. In order to do this, a more complete enumeration of the phenomena within the sphere of consciousness must be given. We recognise innumerable worlds around us, and that in which we dwell is contemplated as only one among a multitude. Directing special attention to the world which we inhabit, as the one with which we are most familiar, we recognise it as a world of vast extent, with great varieties of surface, which cannot be altered or moulded according to human inclination ; while, connected with it, there are certain forces which we cannot control, and which are, nevertheless, clearly obeying fixed laws. Passing to another class of phenomena belonging to the external world, we recognise the singular provision it contains for supplying our bodily wants, so that there is a complete adaptation of our physical nature to the world in which we exist. Advancing still further in our observation, till we contemplate

the relation between the outer and inner world, we find in the external world an adaptation to our mental constitution also, inasmuch as the various appearances of its surface, as well as all the forms of animal and vegetable life, are capable of rousing and gratifying in us the sense, either of the sublime, or of the beautiful. And finally, contemplating the mental phenomena alone, we discover the facts which are the most striking and important. Here we find phenomena, belonging to our own being, which we recognise as essentially superior to everything merely external and material. Here are the powers of knowledge, bringing into subjection all external objects as matters of contemplation; here are fundamental beliefs, authoritative and final, not to be deduced from the widest experience; here are the principles of moral rectitude, by which we are a law unto ourselves, the power of free-will, and the sense of obligation to a moral Governor; and here are the feelings of dependence and reverential awe; all of which together constitute the facts of our own mysterious personality. Such is a statement, in outline, of the co-existent facts, for which we must seek an explanation. They present to view a most complex accumulation of existences, among which each conscious intelligence is a distinct personality, and yet all of them exist harmoniously in the constitution of one grand unity. Gather all these facts together as *one object* of contemplation, and the question is, How to account for their existence. The mind, while conscious that it is itself within this sphere, seeks an explanation of the recognised facts both belonging to the external world and the world within. *The problem is necessarily one*, and

cannot be legitimately divided into a series of problems, each of which shall give their partial contribution to the cumulative evidence warranting a general conclusion. Such a subdivision of this one great problem proceeds on a mistake concerning its *origin*, and I humbly think that it has given a most unfortunate aspect to the whole of our literature on this momentous subject.

Let me ask the reader's careful attention to this point, which must appear one of very considerable importance. How does this problem concerning the existence of the present system of things originate? Not by the mind contemplating only the world without; and still less by directing its attention only to a certain class of facts in the material world, as the chemist, the botanist, or the geologist may do: not by considering exclusively the phenomena which belong to the internal world; and still less by attending only to a certain class of facts in the mental world, as the logician, the metaphysician, or the moralist may do. Any one of these departments of inquiry may, indeed, present materials sufficient to raise the question in the mind; but, so soon as it is originated, it becomes all-comprehensive,—that is to say, it embraces *everything* which consciousness recognises as existing within this limited world. Anything short of this is only a partial, and therefore an inadequate and illegitimate representation of the true problem. The inquiry concerning finite existence, as known by us, is not fairly presented, if it be made to refer only to a part of what is known to exist. You may as well think to describe what human nature is, by speaking only of the mental powers, to the neglect of the physical frame, or by referring to the

bodily organs, without the slightest allusion to the mind. The problem, if raised at all, must at once refer to all finite existence as known, and nothing can be supposed more gratuitous and unfounded than the attempt to separate one class of facts from another, as though the question could be restricted to *some things* known by us. And yet, if we look at the literature of the question, do we not find that, for the most part, each writer has restricted his attention to a limited circle of facts, from which he has laboured to infer the existence of God? In this way many of the arguments for the being of God involve only a partial and unsatisfactory view of the facts. We have those who look almost exclusively at the marks of design in the outer world, of whom Paley may be taken as the representative; we have those who refer only to the fundamental conceptions of the human mind, and in their estimation everything must give way to an *à priori* argument for God's existence, of which class Clarke may be taken as an illustration; and then we have those who elevate the mental phenomena in general, or some particular division of them, into the position of the only facts which can afford a proof of the Divine existence, of which class Sir W. Hamilton is the most distinguished representative. He says, for example, "the only valid arguments for the existence of a God rest on the grounds of man's moral nature;"[1] and, again, he affirms, "that the class of phenomena which requires that kind of cause we denominate a Deity is *exclusively given* in the phenomena of mind."[2] This subdivision of the great problem is most unwarrantable, and tends, quite

[1] *Discussions*, p. 623.

[2] *Lectures on Metaphysics*, I. 26.

unintentionally it must be acknowledged, yet not the less really, to throw an appearance of insufficiency around the entire discussion. Inquiring minds, who have just raised the question for themselves, or who have had their early convictions shaken by doubts, betake themselves to the standard works on the subject, and read, it may be, on the argument from design, or on the *à priori* argument, or on the argument from mental phenomena to the exclusion of the physical world altogether; and while they are persuaded that there is a measure of force in the particular line of reasoning which they have considered, they have the uneasy consciousness that it does not satisfactorily decide the whole question. This must be the penalty of every attempt to divide into parts a great question, which must remain essentially one; for if we are to satisfy the inquiry of the mind, we must include *all the facts* revealed to us in our consciousness. It is to be stated, however, in defence of those who have addressed themselves to only a part of the question, that they have almost uniformly acknowledged that not only the facts to which they turn attention, but all known facts in the universe to which we belong, lead the mind to the recognition of the Divine Being. Sir W. Hamilton is an exception, as appears from the above quotations; he speaks not only of certain arguments as "the only valid arguments," but, what is still worse, he declares that the class of phenomena "which requires that kind of cause we denominate a Deity is *exclusively given* in the phenomena of mind." This is an assertion which has no authority whatever, and so little did he find himself able to restrict the evidence in the exclusive manner indicated,

that he has not advanced twelve lines beyond the statement, before he is found saying, "that the study of the *external world taken with, and in subordination to* that of the internal, . . . may be rendered conducive to the great conclusion." In acknowledging this he embraces all the phenomena; but, in doing so, he destroys his assertion concerning a limited sphere of consciousness, within which alone the evidence for God's existence is to be found.

What, then, is the consequence of Sir W. Hamilton describing mental phenomena as "exclusively" affording evidence for the existence of the Deity? He speaks of the material world as not only presenting no evidence for the being of a God; but, when taken by itself, as leading to a conclusion entirely adverse. His words are these: "The phenomena of matter, taken by themselves (you will observe the qualification, taken by themselves), so far from warranting any inference to the existence of a God, would, on the contrary, ground even an argument to his negation."[1] In accordance with this statement, he speaks of the "*atheistic tendency*" of the study of matter. Now, what authority is there for this assertion of an atheistic tendency in matter, regarded by itself? It supposes that matter can be contemplated, and the inquiry raised concerning its existence, without the slightest regard, on the part of the inquirer, to his own possession of intelligence. Has Sir W. Hamilton forgotten, at this point, the fundamental condition of thought, on which he has so strongly insisted elsewhere, that "consciousness is only possible under the antithesis

[1] *Lectures on Metaphysics*, I. 26.

of a subject and an object *known only in correlation*, and mutually limiting each other?" We cannot suppose that he had forgotten this, and therefore we must understand that he speaks merely of concentrating attention on the physical world alone, while the mind raises the inquiry concerning the origin of its existence. But we cannot conceive that any one, not wilfully attempting to shut his eyes to the truth, could be guilty of the folly of seeking an explanation of the origin of things, while he confined his attention to such a very limited sphere of observation. If any man can contemplate the phenomena of matter, in utter forgetfulness of his own exercise of thought, he may be left without anxiety to pronounce matter the only reality, and to call himself an Atheist. Let him get into raptures about the material world, and, grasping the dust in his hands, let him rejoice that he will soon be like it,—nay, that he is at the very moment in all respects similar. The cause of truth cannot suffer, though he find such base satisfaction. Had he carried his reflections a little further, he should have saved his reputation, by altering his conclusion. As it is, his fellow-men can regard him only as a fool, whose narrow reflections present a pitiful illustration of what Bacon has said, "that a little philosophy inclineth man's mind to Atheism, but depth in philosophy bringeth men's minds about to religion."

But this assertion by Sir W. Hamilton of the "atheistic tendency" of matter implies, that if we withdraw our attention from our own exercise of intelligence, and fix it on the outer world alone, we shall find not only a want of harmony between mind and matter, but we

shall find the one leading to a conclusion *contradictory* of that indicated by the other. The facts in the external world are said to lead to the conclusion that there is no God ; while the facts of mind are said to declare exactly the reverse. On the supposition that God exists, one part of his works is made to contradict the other ; nay, is made to lead men to the monstrous conclusion that the Author of it has no existence. The basis on which this assertion rests is, that the outer world presents no signs of intelligence. What would Paley have said had he lived to read Hamilton's second lecture on metaphysics, in which it is taught that all the facts connected with the physical world, taken by themselves, lead to nothing else than Atheism ? With all deference to the high authority from which it comes, there is abundant reason for saying that a more groundless assertion could not have been uttered. That matter is not intelligent, every one grants ; but it cannot be questioned that matter may be made to assume forms, which are to us undoubted proofs of the action of intelligence upon it. And, if this be so, there are scattered around us, in marvellous profusion and variety, evidences of the work of a creating and disposing mind. What are the *physical sciences*, but structures reared by the long-continued labour of finite intelligence, to the glory of the supreme Mind, who had disposed the modes and relations of material existence in such a way as to admit of analysis and classification ? It is true, that we find dead matter subject to the operation of certain great laws ; but what warrant could this fact, taken by itself, give for an atheistic inference ? If in any case the study of the external

world have an atheistic tendency, that tendency must be in the student, and not in the matter of his study. There are no rules of just inference which could warrant any one to conclude from the subjection of matter to certain fixed laws, that these are inherent in matter and not imposed on it by a higher power. Every one must deny Hamilton's declaration, that "the phenomena of the material world manifest *only* the blind force of a mechanical necessity;"[1] and he himself quotes with the fullest approbation the statement of a French philosopher, who, when showing that philosophy originated in the study of the physical world, says, "that the magnificent spectacle of the material universe, and the marvellous demonstrations of *power and wisdom*, which it everywhere exhibited, were the objects which called forth the earliest efforts of speculation."[2] In truth, the history of philosophy itself, as sketched in Hamilton's own lectures, is a complete refutation of his assertion concerning the atheistic tendency of the exclusive study of the physical universe.

But apart from this, I am most concerned to insist upon the principle, that it is in the highest degree unreasonable to separate the outer from the inner world, in any attempt to discover an explanation of finite existence. In this relation, an exclusive view of the external world is a wilful limitation of the great problem which the human mind seeks to solve; and the assertion that matter, *per se*, warrants an atheistic conclusion, is in every sense deserving of condemnation, as not only groundless, but inconsistent with facts, and fitted to mislead. While, however, Hamilton has made this strange affirmation, it is only

[1] *Lectures on Metaphysics*, I. 28. [2] *Ibid.* I. 104.

fair to remember what has been already quoted in part, that he has added, "that the study of the external world taken with, and in subordination to, that of the internal, not only loses its atheistic tendency, but, under such subservience, may be rendered conducive to the great conclusion, from which, if left to itself, it would dissuade us."[1] It is difficult for the external phenomena, or the study of them, to lose what they never had, but this statement goes far to take away the dangerous tendency of the former groundless affirmation, which should never have been written.

Passing from this attempt to assert for a special class of facts an exclusive place in the great problem concerning the origin of finite existence, it is necessary to consider what the true solution of the problem is, and in what mode that solution is attained. The whole world of finite existence, material and immaterial, as known to us, raises within us the inquiry whence it has its being. It is impossible to rest satisfied with the fact of its existence. Self-existent it cannot be. Everything around us is so liable to change, everything we look upon bears such clear marks of being corruptible, that it is impossible to assign to anything in the external world, an independent or uncaused existence. The supposition of the eternity of matter is self-contradictory. That which is eternal must be immutable, and no man can look upon the physical world, and think of it as free from influences affecting the state of its existence, or as above the possibility of decay. The supposition of the eternity of matter was indeed a popular one among the ancients,

[1] *Lectures on Metaphysics*, I. p. 26.

but it was not adopted in the attempt to answer the simple question before us. How to account for the origin of evil in the world was the great difficulty in ancient speculation, and it was to meet this difficulty that the doctrine of the eternity of matter was proposed. In seeking to avoid the one difficulty, they ran into hopeless contradiction, making perishable matter eternal, and evil a necessary existence, thereby ending in much greater perplexity than could have arisen from the simple acknowledgment of ignorance concerning the origin of evil in the world. To believe that matter is eternal is to contradict the fundamental convictions of our mind, and no one could for a moment have maintained such a doctrine, but for an ulterior end to be served by it. That the limited is independent, that the changeable is self-existent, that the perishable is eternal,— these are the transparent contradictions involved in the assertion of the eternity of matter.

Look, then, upon the world so limited and corruptible, and yet so wonderful in beauty and grandeur, as the dwelling-place of the human family. Look upon man with his intellectual power, subduing all things under him, and making the forces of nature yield to execute his will, and mark thus the dominion which intellect has over matter. Look upon the moral nature of man, involving the great distinction between right and wrong in human conduct, as well as submission to authority enforcing that distinction. Look upon the religious nature of man, with the solemn awe which acknowledges a fear and reverence within, not due to any being around us. Look upon men in their social relations, influencing each

other in innumerable forms, and regulating their conduct towards each other by certain great principles, which are not the result of mutual agreement, but are recognised as having higher sanction. In short, look upon the combined facts connected with our existence in this earthly sphere, and what is the explanation of all? What is the answer which the mind instinctively returns? That there is one Supreme, Infinite Being, Creator, Sustainer, and Ruler of all. Without any reasoning, or any doubt on the matter, the mind acknowledges One Infinite Being. The belief in his existence is a necessary part of our own nature. It is a conviction, which does not come to us from without, but is lodged within, and rises spontaneously in answer to every inquiry concerning the origin of finite existence. Call it a natural, necessary, innate, or intuitive belief, as you will, the belief in the existence of one Infinite Being belongs essentially to the nature of man. It is indeed a conviction which may lie in many minds almost unnoticed, but if the inquiry concerning the origin of finite objects be once raised, the inquiring mind must needs repose upon this foundation, or be tossed about in continual unrest, discovering that his attempted unbelief is a contradiction of his own being. If there be in the human mind certain fundamental beliefs, treasured in the nature and not the product of experience, the belief in the existence of one Infinite Being is the foundation of them all. Let consciousness be examined, and that belief will be found lying as a basis, deep and broad, on which the whole structure of human belief is reared. Let all the acknowledged tests of the distinction between convictions reached

by experience and those inherent in the mind, be applied in this case, and it will appear beyond all question that the belief in God's existence belongs to man by nature.

That there are certain fundamental convictions implanted in our mind, may be held as a settled point in philosophy, requiring no special vindication here. It is no longer necessary to dwell at length on the fact that we find in the mind convictions which could not have been reached by the widest possible experience, or the most patient and accurate reflection, and which must be accepted as self-evident. This being so generally acknowledged, the question may be at once considered, whether the belief in the existence of God is a necessary conviction. If this question is to be answered in the affirmative, as is here maintained, it must appear to be (1.) A belief rising into consciousness when experience and reflection are such as to require its application ; (2.) A *necessary* belief, that is, a belief essential to our nature, so that the opposite cannot be believed, when the real problem is presented to the mind ; and (3.) A *universal* belief, that is, a belief belonging to the nature of *every* man. The first particular is one which there is a peculiar proneness on the part of some to overlook in connexion with this matter, and it is here specially announced as an introductory consideration because it involves a most important modification of the other two. If the first particular be kept in view, it must be apparent that our belief in God has all the marks of a natural conviction.

I. The belief in the existence of the one infinite God, rises into consciousness when experience and reflection are such as to require its application. Although the first

principles of reason are essential to the human mind, it is very erroneous to suppose that they constitute a stock of cognitions and beliefs of which the mind is conscious from the very first dawn of intelligence. They are rather hid as treasures within the soul, than known to be there; they are riches which the mind carries, without being aware of their existence, until the demands of observation or reflection call them up into consciousness, when they are seen to possess all the value of necessary and self-evident truths. Hamilton has well said that "those notions or cognitions which are primitive facts are given us; they are not indeed obtrusive,—they are not even cognisable of themselves. They lie hid in the profundities of the mind, until drawn from their obscurity by the mental activity itself employed upon the materials of experience."[1] To attempt, therefore, to test the doctrine of innate convictions, by inquiring whether children appear in the world with certain first principles before their mind, would be to mistake the doctrine, and specially the manner in which such principles are declared to be recognised within. Equally mistaken would it be to expect that, because such convictions are essential to the nature of man, they must be always present before each individual mind, or recognised with the same frequency by all. What is affirmed is that they are natural possessions of the mind, that they rise into consciousness with all the distinctness and authority of self-evident truths, but that the materials of observation or reflection are needful to call them before us for recognition. They have been given to us for guidance, and they rise

[1] *Lectures on Metaphysics*, II. 351.

before the mind only when its occupation is such as to require their direction.

If this be characteristic of all the original convictions, it must apply also to the belief in the Infinite Being, if that belief is to be acknowledged as innate. In affirming that the belief in God is found among the fundamental convictions of the mind, it is not asserted that it must be uniformly and distinctly recognised. On the contrary, it is expressly declared that the conviction of the Divine existence will arise only when the mind is engaged with those considerations which require it for their explanation, or admit of its application. Man may be engrossed with objects, which do not appear before him in such a way as to call forth the belief in a Supreme Being; his energies may be concentrated on occupations which absorb the attention, and do not demand the exercise of this fundamental conviction. We have abundant evidence in human experience that the belief in God's existence may be left very much unapplied. But this is nothing more than what occurs in the case of acknowledged first principles. It may indeed be shown on special grounds that man has a peculiar proneness to avoid the appeal to the conviction to which we are now referring, but it is not necessary to insist upon the fact here. It is in accordance with the law which regulates the application of first principles, that they be recognised only when the facts of observation or reflection require it. And that the belief in the Divine existence does spontaneously arise to meet the inquiry or want of the mind, seems most obvious. At times, it comes into consciousness to satisfy an inquiry voluntarily prosecuted by

the intellect; and at other times, it appears involuntarily, with irresistible authority, as a necessary complement for the healthy operations of our powers. Let a man ask the explanation of finite existence, and the intuitive belief in the One Infinite Being comes as the answer. Let him be brought into circumstances where conscience is in full exercise, and the conviction of the Divine existence is with him, asserting its authority. If we inquire in what relation the belief in the Divine existence most frequently forces itself for the first time on the notice, there can be no question that with the great majority of men it arises as a natural accompaniment of the exercise of conscience, rather than as the solution of the problem concerning the origin of finite being. And, in reference to the repeated instances of its recognition in individual experience, it is no less certain, that it is much more frequently present to our mind in connexion with its application within the moral sphere, than with a purely intellectual inquiry.

II. The belief in the existence of the One Infinite God, is a *necessary belief*, that is, a belief essential to our nature, so that the opposite cannot be believed, when the real problem is presented to the mind. That problem concerns the origin of the finite existence as known to us, and whenever it is fully contemplated, the conviction of the Divine existence rises spontaneously within us, and that with irresistible authority. The belief in the One Infinite Being, is not the result of any process of reasoning, but is given to the mind as a revelation; it is not dependent on the measure of logical acuteness possessed by individuals, but belongs to man, as man. When,

therefore, it is said to be a necessary belief, it will be observed that the asserted necessity is metaphysical, not logical; that is to say, it is a necessity of the higher reason, not of logical thought.

1. The great majority of men are believing in God without any reference to the arguments which have been used to establish his existence. This is one of the very obvious facts which harmonize only with the admission of the necessity of the conviction. There are multitudes believing in the One Infinite Being with unwavering confidence, who have never even attempted to inquire carefully into the ground on which their conviction rests. They have no more tried to explain to themselves their belief in the Divine existence, than their conviction that there must be a cause for every change. So strong is their consciousness of the necessity of their belief, that they assert it unhesitatingly; and yet so little have they attempted to discover its authority, that if any one were to require them to account for it, they might feel completely at a loss. They have never tried to test for themselves the validity of the argument *à priori*, or of the argument from final causes. Were they entering upon the one, it would only be walking in a labyrinth of perplexity; were they entering upon the other, they might take every step with anxiety, fearing that some objector would declare it insufficient. They want no arguments, and they need none. They are satisfied, because their belief meets the wants of their nature and of their life; whereas, they are conscious that a denial of that belief would at once bring injury and confusion to both. Let any one affirm, then, that a belief in the Divine existence

is to be reached only by a certain process of reasoning, and he will find it impossible to reconcile the facts of human faith with his theory. Such arguments have always been a matter of interest to the few, and not to the many, and it must remain so still. Thousands around him will continue to believe, and thousands more will grow up to believe, in one Infinite Being, without knowing anything about his argument, however clearly stated or acutely reasoned.

2. There are no arguments for the being of God sufficient to warrant the belief as it is found among men. All arguments are not only unnecessary, as shown by the fact that many believe without them; but they are insufficient to lead to the conclusion which they profess to reach. We have a surer conviction than any process of reason can lead to. There can be no higher conviction from which we could infer the Divine existence, and no measure of finite existence can lead to the conviction of the One Infinite God. Any argument *à priori* must virtually assume the point in starting. Any argument *à posteriori* must fall short of the conclusion altogether.

It is a well-known fact, that very many have expressed the gravest doubts concerning the validity of arguments *à priori*. So far from having carried up the mind to an immovable conviction, they have left many convinced of the necessity for surrendering them. If we have certain essential conceptions concerning the Infinite, these presuppose some satisfactory foundation in the mind; in other words, some recognition of a Being to whom they apply; and thus we are still left to fall back upon a fundamental belief. And, further, if we

can have no adequate conception of the Infinite, the possession of such conceptions as we have, cannot be the key to the belief we maintain. Our inadequate conceptions must draw their authority from a primary belief, instead of our conceptions originating a belief which shall outstretch themselves. To suppose that certain fundamental conceptions, such as those concerning existence, or time, or space, are the highest facts in consciousness, from which we must *infer* the existence of an Infinite Being, is not only to turn to a mode of argument which virtually assumes the conclusion to be proved, and consequently the validity of which may be doubted, but is to reverse the natural order of dependence established between our conceptions and beliefs. Sir William Hamilton has very well said—"In the order of nature, belief always precedes knowledge, . . . and even the primary facts of intelligence—the facts which precede, as they afford the conditions of, all knowledge—would not be original were they revealed to us under any other form than that of natural or necessary beliefs."[1] The most careful scrutiny of the operations of our mind must convince us that this is the established relationship between even our most general conceptions and our fundamental beliefs. The real explanation of the force which *à priori* arguments carry with them is that they have pilfered from a primary belief certain conceptions with which, by a process of insufficient reasoning, they attempt to return to the point from which they secretly started. Take, for example, the two fundamental propositions in Clarke's argument,—(1) That something has existed from eternity; and (2)

[1] *Lectures on Metaphysics*, I. 44.

That there has existed from eternity some one immutable and independent Being; and what are these propositions but a virtual assumption of the point to be proved? Who would acknowledge that something has existed from eternity, except on the authority of a faith already in the mind, and needing no such argument as that of Clarke? And again, who can assent to the assertion that there has existed from eternity some one immutable and independent Being, except upon a much wider basis of belief on which his conceptions have rested long before he knew anything of an argument *à priori?* Facts show that the argument *à priori* has had little to do with the faith of men, and a scrutiny of the argument, in whatever form it be presented, must convince us that it is insufficient to account for our belief.

If, then, the argument *à priori* fail us, shall we turn to the argument from design? But this also is insufficient to account for the faith which we acknowledge. For, in the first place, the marks of design can only warrant the inference of a designer, and must leave altogether unexplained the fact that we believe in an Infinite Being, independent of all, and creator of all. And further, all that we discover concerning proofs of design in the world, can only entitle us to infer a cause adequate to produce the results observed, and again must leave unexplained the fact that we believe in a God, not only able to produce far greater works than those which we behold, but really possessed of boundless power. And finally, we find that men who have a very partial acquaintance with the marks of design in the world, and those who have carried out a most extended course of observation,

have nevertheless the same faith in one Infinite God. Their belief does not present the character of a conclusion continually enlarged as the sphere of their observation widens; but, whether their observation has been little or much, their faith is the same. These facts are enough to settle the point concerning the argument *à posteriori*, and to show that it is unquestionable, that "a demonstration of the absolute from the relative is logically absurd; as in such a syllogism we must collect in the conclusion what is not distributed in the premises."[1]

Arguments *à priori* and *à posteriori* are alike unnecessary and unsatisfactory. They are both insufficient as arguments, and yet they come so much into harmony with what we believe, that we must regard them both as concerned with the truth, though inadequate to establish it. But, of the two, the argument from design, or final causes, has always been the most popular, not merely because it is the simplest, but because it really presents the problem concerning the origin of finite existence, to which the mind brings forth the answer from the depth of its own beliefs. If, then, all the reasoning to prove the being of God is insufficient to gain its purpose, and yet men acknowledge that the Deity exists, we are shut up to admit that the belief is a necessary one.

3. The denial of the existence of God involves a violation of the fundamental principles of our reason. In affirming that the belief in one Infinite Being is a *necessary* belief, I indicated that the necessity is metaphysical and not logical, and it now becomes important that attention be given to the difference between these two.

[1] Hamilton's *Discussions*, p. 16.

Logical necessity is that which belongs to the understanding, or to thought proper, as for example, that the whole is greater than a part. If I understand what a whole and a part are in relation to each other, I must think that the whole is greater than a part. Metaphysical necessity is that which belongs to the higher reason, or our natural convictions, as for example, that with which we are now concerned,—that there is one Infinite Being, and if this be a necessary belief, we cannot deny it without contradicting our own nature. In the one case there arises an impossibility in thought, as—that a part is greater than the whole; in the other there is a violation of our reason, by affirming what is incapable of application to our life and observation, as—that there is no Infinite Being. When, therefore, I say that the belief in one Infinite Being is a *necessary* belief, I mean that it is essential to our nature, so that the opposite cannot be believed, when the real problem is presented to the mind. And on the other hand, the assertion that there is no Infinite Being, will be found to be out of harmony with our life and experience, so as to cast the mind into disquiet whenever any attempt is made to satisfy the understanding concerning the origin of finite beings, or to ascertain the authority on which the decisions of conscience rest.

Let a man contemplate the outer world with the wonderful proofs of wisdom abounding everywhere in it, and then look in upon the constitution of his own mind, and let him ask how the world has been originated and maintained, and he will find that his mind instinctively presents the conviction of an Infinite Creator and Sus-

tainer. It will yield to the authority of this belief, as a satisfactory answer to all his inquiry; while, on the other hand, it will be felt impossible to present any other solution of the problem. Nowhere save in a necessary belief can the human mind find rest in answer to its questions concerning the known forms of existence. Let him deny this, and affirm that he has no evidence that there is an Infinite Being, but must be contented to be without such a conviction, and his unbelief will involve him in endless confusion, both in thought and action. He has put himself out of harmony with the world, and even with his own nature. He can give no theory of the universe; he can believe in no science without inconsistency, for analysis and classification are possible only on the principles of mind, that is, presuppose an intelligent Originator of the objects which admit of analysis and classification; he cannot acknowledge the dictates of his own conscience without inconsistency, for conscience has no authority except there be a Supreme Ruler; he cannot insist that all men should be regulated by moral law, without attempting to force his inconsistencies on others. And, as the penalty of his unbelief, he cannot seek to satisfy either his understanding or his conscience, without being tossed on a sea of doubt, with continual disquiet. The innumerable contradictions which emerge from professed unbelief in an Infinite God are unmistakable proofs that our belief in the Divine existence is a necessary one.

A critic has asked what kind of necessary belief that is which has been so frequently denied? And to his question I answer, that it is of the ordinary kind. It

has been often denied that there is an external world, but who hesitates on that account to affirm that our belief in the outer world is a necessary one? Human personality has been denied, and all our experience reduced to a series of sensations, but who hesitates on that account to believe in his own existence? It is unhappily the misfortune even of our primary beliefs, to be denied by some men, but these convictions stand unharmed by the contradiction, and hold their sway over the human family. If our belief in the Deity be at times denied, it is nothing more than has happened to other necessary convictions, and in almost all cases in which such denial occurs, it will be found that the mind instead of looking upon the *facts* which naturally awaken belief, is either working with some *assumed and false definition*, or is involved in the intricacies of some elaborate *theory*. It is not the man who is looking upon the fields, rivers, and mountains, who is found denying the existence of an outer world. It is not the man who is moving amongst his fellow-men, who is found denying his own personality. And so, it is not the man who is really contemplating the facts to be explained, who is found denying the Divine existence. The proof, then, of the necessity of our belief is not to be found in the impossibility of men in any way denying it, but in the contradictions which arise, if they do.

I am very far from asserting that, since the Divine existence is a necessary belief, it is impossible for men either to neglect or deny it. And any one who argues that such impossibility is an inevitable consequence, mistakes the nature of the necessity involved. Let a

man refuse or neglect to turn his attention to the facts of the question, and he may maintain anything to his own satisfaction, no matter how monstrous it may seem to others. Let him refuse to apply his mind in the relation in which a necessary conviction is said to arise, and he may negligently overlook what his nature contains, and dogmatically contradict what is nevertheless a primary belief. Nay more, he may reason with great acuteness and power to a conclusion directly subversive of our fundamental belief. Let him start with false premises,—let him do as Spinoza has done,—let him give certain false definitions, and the conclusion may be attained, but only at the expense of reason. Any one may reach a Pantheistic conclusion, making all things God, if he only, like Spinoza, define *substance* and *attribute* in a sense in which other persons never employed them. He may arrive at his conclusion in such a case with logical accuracy, and yet that conclusion be metaphysically untrue. Define a substance "that which exists in itself, and is conceived by itself," and an attribute "that which is the essence of a substance," and a man may make nonsense of the universe. But in all this he is only working among his own fancies, and is never looking at the facts before him. Let him maintain Atheism or Pantheism as he may, he cannot live in harmony with his theory. Conscience will work despite his theory, whether atheistic or pantheistic, which it could not do, if either theory were true. The inquiry will often arise in his mind,—Whence came I, and whence have come all these objects around me? And with such questions before his mind, he will find the truth pressed

upon him. He may stifle the inquiry, and escape from it by turning his thoughts to other objects; but, let him prosecute it, and as he is an intelligent being, with the soul of humanity within him, and possessed of all its principles, he must believe.

III. The belief in the existence of one Infinite Being is a *universal* belief, that is, a belief belonging to the nature of every man. In connexion with this statement it is necessary to take what has been said concerning the first-mentioned feature of our natural convictions. It has been shown that these convictions while in the mind, are brought up in consciousness by the demands of observation or reflection. In accordance with this law regulating their rise, the first consideration illustrative of the universality of our belief in the Divine existence is, that all men are *capable* of having this conviction awakened within them. By this it is meant, that a simple turning of the attention to the facts connected with finite existence, or guidance of the reflections upon these facts, is enough to raise this belief before any mind. This is the evidence that there is a conviction within, harmonizing with all things in human observation, and giving the key to their explanation. In bringing men to the acknowledgment of this great truth, no reasoning is needed. The reference to facts is enough, where no reasoning could suffice, and experience testifies that we escape the difficulties which are raised against such a belief, by a direct appeal to the mind of one previously negligent of such a primary fact, or professedly unbelieving.

In full verification of the fact that all men are *capable* of having the belief in the Infinite Being awak-

ened in their mind, is the other fact, that in all ages and in all conditions this belief has been found swaying the minds of men. If we go back upon the history of the past, we find this conviction appearing at all points, and that more or less distinctly according as the minds of men were found looking upon the facts of their observation, freed from the influence of acquired habits of thought. And even where the reign of such habits was undisturbed, we find among all the gods of the people, homage done to one who is supreme and all-powerful. Yet, with this recognition of a supreme god, there is such a combination of degrading forms of thought as to make it plain that the belief in the Supreme was not allowed to stand freely out before the mind, and exercise a due regulative power over the modes of thinking. This admits, however, of a natural explanation in accordance with the law regulating the rise into consciousness of the primary beliefs lying in the depths of the mind. But, passing from this, all the researches of our own day concerning the condition of the tribes sunk in the debasement of heathenism show that they have retained, in a very marvellous manner considering their circumstances, the belief in one great Supreme Spirit. Dr. M'Cosh has said that, in order to vindicate the assertion of a primary belief in the Divine existence, it will be necessary to reconcile the doctrine "with the known facts of history, and, in particular, with the degraded views which have been entertained in most countries of the Divine Being."[1] This I perfectly acknowledge, and in endeavouring to do so, I know not that I can do better than quote Dr. M'Cosh's

[1] *Intuitions of the Mind*, p. 428.

words in another part of the same work. Referring to the fact that we are prompted to strive after perfection, he says,—"It is this impulse, I apprehend, which makes even the heathen speak of their gods, or at least their supreme god, as ineffably good and immortal; their actual conceptions of his excellence and duration may be extremely inadequate, still they will not allow that there could be any increase made to his attributes; and, under fostering circumstances, the conviction will come out in a more decided form."[1] It could have been little cause for wonder, on the admission of a necessary belief in the Divine existence implanted in human nature, if, in their state, that conviction had never been brought into application. I incline to believe that this might have been the result in many cases, but for the fact that the belief in the supreme Divinity is a first principle in things *moral* as well as *intellectual*. But for the action of conscience, requiring the recognition of a Supreme Governor, there might have been few inquiries concerning the beginning of things, calling forth the belief in an infinite Creator. As things are, it is a very surprising fact that books of travel and research among savage tribes, without their authors having the least reference to the controversy concerning the source of human belief, are found containing the most distinct statements in testimony of the fact that the most uncivilized are found possessed of a belief in a Supreme Being. It would unduly retard the course of argument to introduce a long series of extracts bearing on the point, but as their testimony is important they will be found in an Appendix.[2]

[1] *Intuitions of the Mind*, p. 222.

[2] See Appendix B.

There is one fact which seems at first sight to be adverse to the doctrine that man's belief in God is a necessary one, viz., that the views concerning God are in many cases low and unworthy. But this is only a natural result of the degradation of men's nature, and the explanation of the influence which their debasement has had upon their thoughts concerning God, may be found in the fact *that the belief in the Infinite Being is a primary belief both in the moral and in the intellectual spheres.* As, then, the recognition of God arises more frequently in connexion with the operations of the moral faculty than of the intellect, the debasement of man's moral nature was certain to affect his thoughts concerning the Divinity, even when the necessary belief continued in the mind. This will appear still more distinctly when the law determining the influence of our belief upon our conceptions comes to be considered. In no case can our conceptions come up to the measure of our faith, and the more debased the moral nature becomes, the more unworthy of the primary belief must the thoughts prove.

The admitted tests of the primary convictions of our mind have thus been applied to our belief in the Infinite God, and I hold its claim to the rank of a necessary conviction established beyond all question. If there be fundamental beliefs implanted in our nature, this is the foundation of them all,—the one requisite for enabling the mind of man to find the harmony of things known. That there is one Infinite Being is the highest and grandest truth, to which no lower truth could by any possibility lead us. As the result of this conclusion, the entire reasonings of the sensational school, in making all the

possessions of the mind dependent on experience and reflection, are set aside. And not only so, but all arguments *à priori*, or *à posteriori*, or a combination of the two, are declared unnecessary and insufficient. In opposition to this conclusion, Dr. M'Cosh, in a recent valuable contribution to our philosophical literature, says that we are not obliged "to *call in* separate intuition to discover and guarantee the Divine existence;"[1] while it is here maintained that the facts of consciousness declare that we do actually *rest upon* such a necessary belief.

I cannot admit that Dr. M'Cosh has been successful in presenting an argument for the being of God, such as may enable us to dispense with a necessary belief. His theory is that our belief is the combined product of observation, and of the application of certain necessary convictions, such as our belief in causality, personality, and infinity. In this way, he denies that the belief in the Divine existence is *original*, and makes it rest on various convictions for a foundation. He lays the basis of his argument by declaring that "there are facts involved," in observing which, man discovers "phenomena which bear all the marks of being *effects*."[2] In another part of his work, when treating of the relation of cause and effect, he states what are the distinguishing marks of an effect, leading every one to regard it as such. He says —"An effect is known as either a new substance, or as a change in a previously existing substance."[3] Now, if the effects observed are only changes in a "previously existing substance," they cannot lead to the inference that there was a Creator. On the other hand, if the ques-

[1] *Intuitions of the Mind*, p. 429. [2] *Ibid.* p. 420. [3] *Ibid.* p. 269.

tion be raised concerning the origin of finite existence, the world as known to us cannot be known as "a new substance." We cannot even prove that the world began to be; and we cannot receive the testimony of any eye-witness of the fact, for there were no members of our race who saw the world come into existence. It must, therefore, on the above definition, be unknown to us, and a matter of doubt, whether the world is "an effect," and accordingly Dr. M'Cosh is found saying, that "it may be admitted that there is a possibility of doubt as to whether the phenomenon is an effect."[1] Does our author mean to say that there can be the shadow of a doubt on the matter? Does he admit any doubt in his own mind? Does he find such a doubt prevalent among men, though not one of them can have the least evidence that the world, as such, is an effect? What does our author mean by saying that "the object being offered," "it is a *probability*" that the object was an effect? A probability! Is this all that can be said of it? Who is disposed to say that it is only probable? But, further, what can be meant by declaring in the same sentence that it is "a moral certainty of the highest order"? Are probabilities and moral certainties identical? And, if not, how is the same thing here declared to be a probability and a moral certainty? Dr. M'Cosh's argument seems to me insufficient in its very first stage, for, taking his own definition, the world is not known to us as an effect. The confusion into which he has been led, betrays the instability of the foundation which he was attempting to lay. So far from fortifying his own posi-

[1] *Intuitions of the Mind*, p. 269.

tion, he has exposed its weakness. The fact that the world is not known to us as *an effect*, that is, as a new substance ; and the fact that it cannot be proved by any evidence in our possession, that it once was a new substance ; taken along with the additional fact, that men nevertheless generally acknowledge it to be an effect, present very strong confirmatory testimony in favour of the doctrine that we have a necessary belief in the Divine existence.

Insufficient, however, as the first stage in Dr. M'Cosh's argument is, an examination of the second betrays similar defect. His second point is that "the principle of causation is involved."[1] In stating what this principle implies, he says very accurately "that it is an essential part of the internal law, that it requires the cause to be adequate to produce the effect." But, supposing it be granted that the world is an effect, as we all believe it is, if we infer from its existence, that of a cause "adequate to produce the effect," we do not reach by such an inference the belief in an Infinite God. On the contrary, we only show the insufficiency of such an argument to account for that general belief in the existence of the Infinite One, which is found among men ; for God is not identical with a cause adequate to produce the world. This is the weak point in the argument from design, which Hume has seized upon, and demolished, by reasoning which must be acknowledged unanswerable. He says, "The cause must be proportioned to the effect ; and if we exactly and precisely proportion it, we shall never find in it any qualities that point farther, or afford an infer-

[1] *Intuitions of the Mind*, p. 434.

ence concerning any other design or performance. Such qualities must be somewhat beyond what is merely requisite for producing the effect which we examine. Allowing, therefore, the gods to be the authors of the existence or order of the universe, it follows, that they possess that precise degree of power, intelligence, and benevolence, which appears in their workmanship ; but nothing further can be proved, except we call in the assistance of exaggeration and flattery, to supply the defects of argument and reasoning."[1] No sober-minded man can feel any sympathy with the spirit in which these last words are written ; but, at the same time, no candid reasoner can refrain from admitting that his criticism is unanswerable. It seems surprising that Dr. M'Cosh should adopt the old form of argument, and content himself with a mere statement of it. Once more, I must say that his argument lends indirect testimony to the need for the admission of an original belief.

Our author, so far from saying anything concerning the glaring insufficiency of the application of the law of causality, slips on from the inference of "a Being adequate to produce the whole effect," to say that, "*if*, on the contemplation of the nature of that Being, *we find no marks of his being an effect*, the intuition makes no call on us to go farther ;" and thence, he slips easily into the *declaration*, that "the mind reaches the All-powerful Being."[2] Here again the argument fails, for though we infer a cause adequate to produce the world, it is impossible to contemplate "the nature of that Being," and "find no marks of his being an effect ;" and Dr. M'Cosh

[1] *Essays*, II. 153. [2] *Intuitions of the Mind*, p. 432.

has unwarrantably transformed his adequate cause into an "All-powerful Being."

It is unnecessary to follow the author at great length through the third and last stage in his reasoning, in which he declares, that "other intuitions take hold of other facts, and confirm the argument, and clothe the Divine Being with a variety of perfections" (p. 435). It might easily be shown how unsatisfactory, whether as a mode of expression, or as a description of a mental process, it is to speak of us making an application of certain intuitions, whereby we "*clothe* the Divine Being with a variety of perfections." There must be mistake in the process of reasoning concerning the origin of our belief, which could make it seem appropriate to use such phraseology, as though it were part of the work of each man to make up a god for himself.

It is in this section of his argument, however, that our author seeks to reach the conclusion that God, whose existence he endeavours to prove, is *Infinite*, and it may be important to inquire on what grounds, and with what consistency, he brings in this as a link in his argument for the Divine existence. Of the "other intuitions" brought into requisition in this branch of the reasoning there are three: *first*, that of "intelligence and personality," which, it is said, "*suggests* the idea of God who is a spirit;" *second*, that of moral good, on account of which, it is said, "that the mind feels something wanting *till it hears* of a Moral Governor;" and, *third*, the "conviction that there is an infinite existence," which is held to apply to space and time; but it is said "infinite extension and duration, and our belief regarding

them, are felt to be void and empty *till we are able to place in them* infinite substance with infinite attributes." In viewing this somewhat dubious form of progress toward a conclusion, it is only reasonable to ask *how long it may be* till the consciousness of our "intelligence and personality suggests the idea of God who is a Spirit;" and *how long* our moral nature may be in operation "till it hears of a Moral Governor;" and how long the "conviction that there is an infinite existence" may be in our mind "till we are able to place" an infinite substance in extension and duration as their occupant? And it were no less reasonable to inquire *how* the suggestion is made in the first case; and *how* the mind hears of a Moral Governor in the second; and *how* we become able to fill up infinite extension and duration with an infinite substance? All these are most important questions which must be answered, in order to insure the success of the argument, and yet not one of which Dr. M'Cosh has attempted to answer. But I am more concerned to show that the steps embraced in this section of his argument are inconsistent with what he has very satisfactorily established in other parts of his able work. A reference to the mode in which he seeks to reach the fact that God is *infinite* may suffice. It is a leading feature and a special excellence in Dr. M'Cosh's work, to maintain that "the intuitions of the mind are primarily directed to *individual objects*." Now the conviction concerning the Infinite is one of the intuitions to which he appeals for completing his argument concerning the Divine existence; when, therefore, he says that "the mind has a strong conviction that there is an infinite existence," he

must mean that we have a conviction that there is an "*individual object*" which is infinite. If he assert less than this, he tosses to the winds all his declared principles; if he mean this, as he must if he be consistent, he declares all reasoning towards the Infinite needless and insufficient, and overturns his own argument by the act. So conscious, indeed, is our author of the fact that the conviction concerning the individual infinite object is originally given in the mind, that we find the acknowledgment in earlier parts of his work, before he came to the straits of his argument for the Divine existence. In a very early part, under the general head in which he enunciates the fact that intuitions are directed to "individual objects," this statement is found: The mind "does not form some sort of vague notion of a general infinite, but fixing its attention on *some individual thing—such as* space, or time, or *God*—it is *constrained to believe* it to be infinite" (p. 32). Again, when he comes to treat of our "primitive beliefs," his first proposition concerning the Infinite is, that "we have an *intuitive belief* in regard to the infinity of certain objects;" and, though he first unfolds it in reference to space and time, he does not finish without writing two full pages in application to the Deity (pp. 220, 223). It is true, indeed, that his second proposition runs thus—"We believe in infinite space and time, and in *the possibility of infinite substance or being.*" But this latter portion of the sentence is a glaring inconsistency. Where now is the fundamental position that "the intuitions of the mind are primarily directed to *individual objects?*" Is it to be altered? Are there some cases in which the intuitions of the mind imply only the "*possibility*" of the

existence of certain objects? I leave these questions with my readers for impartial consideration, while I once more affirm that no argument can be sufficient for establishing that belief in the Divine existence which we necessarily hold. The words of Dr. M'Cosh himself are fitly expressive of this, when he says: "If the intelligence does not find the Infinite in the perception with which it sets out, it never could fashion it by cutting or carving, by constructing or suprasupposition" (p. 216). Dr. M'Cosh describes his argument as the process by which he "would build up the cumulative idea." It seems to me that the "building" is very far from secure. It is too complicated to be the true explanation of the simple belief which is everywhere found among men; it even confounds the distinction between our belief in God's existence, and our conceptions regarding His nature; and, last of all, it is totally insufficient as an argument. So far from having presented satisfactory reasons to show why he is "not convinced that we are obliged to call in a separate intuition to discover and guarantee the Divine existence," I submit, with all deference, that a reconsideration of the argument will lead its author to join the ranks of those who hold by a necessary conviction in the mind, as the only adequate explanation of human belief.

The limits of our own nature, and of all the objects around us, require for their explanation the recognition of a Supreme Being. The problem is one, and the solution is found only in the assent of the mind to the existence of One Infinite God; and, as this cannot be reached by any sufficient proof of His being, our acknowledgment of it is really a fundamental principle in our

mind. This recognition of an Infinite Being is essentially of the nature of *faith*, which is a simple exercise of mind that does not admit of logical definition. Though the Infinite One is not among the objects of perception, His existence is a matter of belief to man. The mind recognises a Deity, and thinks, and feels, and acts on the basis of its belief. This being the nature of the act of mind by which we recognise the Divine existence, it is necessary to inquire what this belief involves. And, beyond all dispute, it is the recognition of the Infinite Being as a *Person*. It is not a belief in The Infinite or The Absolute, as abstractions, but in a living, conscious, active being. If any one choose to say that an Infinite Personality is a contradiction, and yet that "it is our duty to think of God as personal, and it is our duty to believe that He is infinite," as Dr. Mansel has done ;[1] he says that it is our *duty to think* what is a *contradiction of our belief*, than which nothing could be more inconsistent. A careful consideration of what is involved in our belief in the Divine existence will show that we *believe* in God, not only as infinite, but also as personal. Our belief is in an Infinite Personality, and not in an infinite abstraction, or an infinite universe. And so Dr. Mansel himself, reasoning against the Pantheistic system, affirms that we are not "justified, even on philosophical grounds, in denying the Personality of God."[2] A closer attention to the established relation between belief and thought would have saved Dr. Mansel, not only from this asserted contradiction, but from a multitude besides, with which his pages are covered, to the great confusion of the discussion

[1] *Bampton Lectures*, p. 89. [2] *Ibid.* p. 85.

in which we are involved. But, passing this for the present, if regard be had to the remarks previously made concerning the mode in which the necessary belief in the Divine existence is brought into consciousness, it will be admitted that it arises primarily as the acknowledgment of a *Supreme Being* ruling over the world; and as we proceed further with its application, it most distinctly involves the recognition of Him as infinite and absolute. We adore a God supreme, unlimited, and self-existent. Such is the Being recognised by the fundamental belief in human nature,—the Being before whom men must bow in deepest reverence,—the Being of whose greatness there is some acknowledgment even among the most unthinking and morally debased tribes of earth. Whatever disputes have been raised by Sir William Hamilton, and others, concerning the question whether we can have any *knowledge* of the Infinite, none is raised by them concerning the fact that we *believe* in the existence of the Infinite One. It is admitted that the Infinite in the fulness of His excellence is the object of faith; in other words, that faith involves the recognition of the really Infinite. This fact is one of very great importance in connexion with the discussion which is to follow concerning man's knowledge of the Infinite. Our faith in the Infinite God is a common basis from which we may reason, and to which we may return at all times for the purpose of testing the harmony of our reasoning with our fundamental belief. It is the more urgent that this fact should be kept distinctly in view, because both Sir William Hamilton and Dr. Mansel, while admitting a belief in the One Infinite God, have almost entirely failed

to take any account of the bearing which that belief must have on the question concerning the possibility of a knowledge of the Infinite. The one glaring defect in Hamilton's system, as a system, seems to me to be the uncertainty which attaches to the exact position he intended to assign to the belief in the Infinite God, and the total want of any exposition of the relation which that *belief* bears to our *thought* concerning God. The latter defect is also conspicuous throughout the entire reasoning of Dr. Mansel, in which, with a much more frequent reference to our faith, there is still no satisfactory investigation concerning the relation between faith and knowledge, which so clearly affects the discussion. A careful study of Hamilton's system, and of the later reasoning of Dr. Mansel, must convince every one, that, if we are to advance to any settled results in this discussion, nay, if we are clearly to understand the two opposite theories, there must be a more distinct indication of the exact territory of faith, and the relation which it bears to that of knowledge. I do most earnestly call attention to the necessity for this, that we may be saved from needless strife arising from a confusion which keeps the ground in a haze. The conviction of this necessity has made me dwell at length on the authority and nature of our belief in the Infinite, and constrains me to attempt something more in the way of indicating the relation between faith and knowledge. Before doing this, however, it is important to mark what has been said by Hamilton and Dr. Mansel in reference to our belief in the Infinite.

It cannot fail to be a matter of regret to every one interested in the progress of metaphysical discussion, that

Sir W. Hamilton has left so much uncertainty around his views concerning our belief in the Infinite Being, and has not distinctly explained the bearing of his reasonings concerning the Unconditioned on the questions of Natural Theology. It is a singular fact, that notwithstanding the very lengthened discussion concerning the Infinite, the Absolute, and the Unconditioned, found in his writings, there are extremely few references to our belief in the existence of one Infinite Being, and the relation in which we stand to Him. This clearly shows that Sir W. Hamilton entered upon the discussion much more with the view of presenting a logical refutation of the theories of continental philosophers concerning the Absolute, than for the purpose of instituting an original analysis of the facts of consciousness bearing on our relation to the Infinite Being. A careful comparison, however, of the few passages applying to this subject favours the conviction that he held by a necessary belief in the Infinite God. That he resolutely maintained a belief in the Divine existence, there can be no doubt, and that he decidedly affirmed the inconsistency of every denial of that belief, is equally certain. The only doubtful point is whether he held that belief to be produced by an inference from the facts of experience, or to be a necessary and fundamental belief of the reason. That the latter is the correct view may be safely inferred, although it must be acknowledged that there are some parts of his writings which seem to lead to an opposite conclusion. He has, indeed, reasoned so strenuously concerning the impossibility of our thought being in any way conversant with the Infinite, that it would seem inevitable as a result of

that reasoning that the belief in the Infinite must be a necessary conviction above all reasoning, and yet the matter is not so clear as might have been expected. The most distinct affirmation on the subject is found in the letter which he addressed to me as a criticism of the first edition of the present work. He there says, "When I deny that the Infinite can by us be *known*, I am far from denying that by us it is, must, and ought to be *believed*."[1] The asserted *necessity* of the belief in the Infinite which is found in this passage seems to indicate that he held it to be a fundamental, original, and natural conviction in the mind; and the more importance is to be given to this statement, as it was written expressly for the purpose of indicating the mode in which the human mind is assured of the existence of an Infinite Being.

If any doubt attaches to the point, it arises chiefly from a passage in his Metaphysical Lectures, where, instead of ranking the belief among the necessary convictions, he says that it is "a *regressive inference*, from the existence of a special class of effects, to the existence of a special character of cause."[2] There is, however, throughout the lengthened passage to which the above is the introduction, so much of what appears to be *inverted reasoning*, that the whole seems to me rather a dissertation illustrative of the application of a primary belief, than a process of reasoning to be tested by the requirements of an exact logical demonstration. Though he speaks of it as an "argument," he says "it hinges on the fact—Does a state of things really exist such as is only possible through the agency of a Divine cause?" If this be the

[1] *Lectures on Metaphysics*, II. 530. [2] *Ibid.* I. 26.

state of the question, does it not really imply that the existence of a "Divine cause" is already a settled point, and that the only inquiry is whether the agency of that cause is needful to account for the facts known to us by experience? If the problem be how to explain the universe as known to exist, how is it that Hamilton says, "we must first of all consider what kind of cause it is which constitutes a Deity, and what kind of effects they are which allow us to infer that a Deity must be."[1] This is a singular mode of carrying on a "regressive inference." Instead of beginning to inquire what the facts are, and then asking what is the legitimate "inference" from them, he sets himself to determine first, what is the nature of the Deity, and what is the kind of effect which we can attribute to his agency. If we follow our author farther, his course is no less strange, for we find him "attempting to infer" the "*absolute order* of existence in itself" from "the *particular order* within the sphere of our experience."[2] Again he is found declaring that "with the *proof of the moral nature of man*, stands or falls the proof of the existence of a Deity," whereas our moral nature can only be accepted by us, and cannot be proved, as he himself acknowledges when he says, that "intelligence reveals prescriptive principles of action, absolute and universal,"[3] and that "without philosophy, a natural conviction of free agency lives and works in the recesses of every human mind."[4] It seems impossible to account for these inconsistencies except on the supposition, that, though he speaks of it as a "regressive inference" and an "argument," he intends nothing more than to indicate

[1] *Lectures on Metaphysics*, I. 26. [2] *Ibid.* I. 30. [3] *Ibid.* I. 29. [4] *Ibid.* I. 33.

the fact that the phenomena of mind are those which awaken most readily the primary belief in the Divine Being, which is hid in the depth of our nature. It were injustice to his great reputation to suppose that here he attempts an inference from the particular to the universal, from the relative to the absolute, and any one who would incline to do so may be restrained by the apparent approval with which Sir W. Hamilton quotes the opinion of Kant that "a demonstration of the Absolute from the Relative is logically absurd;"[1] and still more, by these words, "Departing from the particular, we admit that we can never, in our highest generalizations, rise above the Finite."[2] It seems to be the only reasonable conclusion that Hamilton held a primary belief in the infinite God. At all events, this is certain, and it is all that is required for my purpose, he held that the Infinite "is, must, and ought to be, believed."

In passing to ascertain the views of Dr. Mansel concerning the nature and authority of our faith in the Divine existence, there is no difficulty. He most distinctly declares the conviction that our belief in the Infinite One is necessary and fundamental. Concerning the *authority of our belief*, he says that it is not reached through a process of reasoning: "It must be allowed that it is *not through reasoning* that men obtain the first intimation of their relation to the Deity."[3] Again, he says that we are shut up to it by the nature we possess; "We are compelled, by the *constitution of our minds*, to believe in the existence of an Absolute and

[1] *Discussions*, p. 16.

[2] *Ibid.* p. 15.

[3] *Limits of Religious Thought*, p. 102.

Infinite Being:"[1] that it is a necessary conviction; as when, speaking of "the Principle of Causality" and "the belief in the existence of God," he says, "both are principles inherent in our nature, exhibiting, whatever may be their origin, those characteristics of *universality* and *certainty*, which mark them as a part of the inalienable inheritance of the human mind:"[2] and finally, that "the denial of its existence involves a contradiction."[3] Concerning *what we are to acknowledge as involved* in this necessary belief, he not only says, as has been seen above, that it is a belief in the existence of "an Absolute and Infinite Being," and a belief in a First Cause, but also that "we are compelled by our religious consciousness to believe in the existence of a *personal* God;"[4] and further, concerning the existence of the Infinite in *relation*, these words occur, "Though our positive religious consciousness is of the finite only, there yet runs through the whole of that consciousness the accompanying conviction that the Infinite does exist, and must exist, . . . and *that it exists along with the Finite.*"[5] In all this, I perfectly agree with Dr. Mansel, and I feel highly gratified that we have a basis so broad and distinct, from which we may start, and to which we may return on every occasion when it is necessary to appeal to the foundation of faith. However much I may differ from the distinguished author of *The Limits of Religious Thought*, as I must do to a very great extent, and almost at every step henceforth, I rejoice that we have such agreement concerning the deliverance and authority of our belief in the Infinite, as will save us from needless disputes on that point.

[1] *Limits of Religious Thought*, p. 67.
[2] *Ibid.* p. 172.
[3] *Ibid.* p. 95.
[4] *Ibid.* p. 122.
[5] *Ibid.* p. 120.

It is necessary, however, to consider at once what bearing our belief in the One Infinite Being may have on many of those questions which have been raised concerning the Infinite and Absolute. Having contemplated the deliverance of an authoritative belief in the Infinite, a position has now been reached from which it is possible to clear the discussion of much reasoning which has only confused and encumbered it. As I have already had occasion to remark, Sir W. Hamilton has written much on this subject which applies to a mere abstraction, and to nothing else; while Dr. Mansel has written a very great deal which has not the least application to what he acknowledges to be the one object of our Faith. To use the expressive phrase of the latter, applied by him to Pantheism, I would say that the reasonings which both authors have presented concerning the Infinite are perplexed and encumbered with "lifeless abstractions and sophistical word-jugglings," which require to be completely cleared away, before there can be any hope of coming out to a fair combat on the important questions at issue in this controversy. I shall, therefore, endeavour to indicate some of those conclusions which follow from what both authors admit, namely, that we must believe in the Infinite Being, and which must very largely affect the whole discussion. The common admission between us is, that we must believe in the existence of one Infinite God; and the conclusions following from that are most important.

1. *The term Infinite is not a mere form of expression to indicate our inability to think in a certain manner; but, on the contrary, is exclusively applicable to one great*

Being, whom we adore as supreme. This completely sweeps away Sir W. Hamilton's distinction of the Unconditioned into the Infinite and the Absolute, as I shall hereafter show somewhat more at length. Here it is enough to indicate, without special criticism, that many passages in the writings both of Sir W. Hamilton and of Dr. Mansel must be pronounced inconsistent and unwarrantable. The former is found saying that "the Infinite and Absolute are *only* the names of two counter *imbecilities* of the human mind;"[1] and the latter says, that "the Absolute and the Infinite are, like the Inconceivable and the Imperceptible, names indicating not an object of thought, or of consciousness at all, but the *mere absence* of the conditions under which thought is possible."[2] These quotations, which are only specimens of many such, betray how completely both authors have occupied themselves with abstractions borrowed from German speculation, and how little they have been regulated by that fundamental belief which they both acknowledge. In reply, it is enough to say that, according to the testimony of our primary belief, Sir W. Hamilton is doubly wrong in applying the terms Infinite and Absolute respectively to two opposite extremes, and in making them refer to a mental imbecility, instead of to the one self-existent Being. In reply to Dr. Mansel, it must be said that every passage in the Bampton Lectures which refers to our belief in the Infinite Being, contradicts the above opinion, and reproves it as venturing on a line of argument in which it has been unwarrantably presumed that "the vague generalities of the Absolute and the Infinite

[1] *Discussions*, p. 21. [2] *Limits of Religious Thought*, p. 95.

may be more reverently and appropriately employed than the sacred names and titles of God."[1] Every one who approaches these profound discussions in the proper spirit will honour Dr. Mansel for the feeling which made him shrink from using the name of the Deity in his abstract disquisitions, but that feeling, which is so admirable in itself, cannot shield the metaphysical argument from searching scrutiny concerning its truth as applying to the Divine Being. The "vague generalities" —the Absolute and the Infinite—are made to represent the Deity, and it must be allowable to transpose the terms, in order to test the argument. When, therefore, he says that "the Absolute and the Infinite are names indicating the *mere absence* of the conditions under which thought is possible;" when he says that these names are like the *Inconceivable* and the *Imperceptible;* and when, on another occasion, he affirms that "the Infinite, from a human point of view, is *merely a name* for the absence of those conditions under which thought is possible,"[2] and "the Absolute is a term expressing no object of thought, but *only a denial* of the relation by which thought is constituted,"—he places entirely out of account what he has written concerning our necessary belief in one Infinite and Absolute Being. Every one acquainted with the subject will interpret the above passages in accordance with the theory of the author, that the Infinite or Absolute cannot be an object of *thought;* but, while they harmonize with that part of his theory, it seems to me that they jar most unpleasantly with the other part of it, which affirms that the Infinite

[1] *Limits of Religious Thought*, p. 64. [2] *Ibid.* p. 72.

and Absolute Being is the object of *belief*. Nay more, they seem to show that his theory concerning the possibilities of thought, leads to statements contradictory of our belief, which is necessary and authoritative. I do not at present linger to inquire how he speaks of the Infinite and Absolute as names which do not indicate "an object of thought or *of consciousness at all*," whereas, in another place he says that "it is *by consciousness alone* that we know that God exists, or that we are able to offer Him any service."[1] But, agreeing as we do, that the Infinite and Absolute God is the object of human belief, I say that these expressions—the Absolute and Infinite—are not names indicating "the mere absence of the conditions under which thought is possible," are not names "like the Inconceivable and the Imperceptible,"—and that "Infinite, from a human point of view," is not merely a name "for the absence of the conditions of thought." "The Inconceivable and the Imperceptible" do not designate any distinct object, or any number of distinct objects, in the existence of which we believe; whereas, the Infinite and Absolute God, "from a human point of view," is the object of faith to all men. In perfect consistency with his theory, Dr. Mansel may affirm that the Infinite God, as infinite, is to him inconceivable; but he cannot, consistently with his theory, maintain that the mental inability to conceive is equivalent to the Infinite God as he is believed by us to exist. He must admit that the one belongs to the human mind, whereas the other applies to God himself; and, therefore, that the terms Inconceivable and Infinite, so far from

[1] *Limits of Religious Thought*, p. 86.

being "like," are in every respect diverse; in other words, that he is inconsistent in attempting to degrade the words Infinite and Absolute to the level of Inconceivable and Imperceptible. Whether the Infinite can be the object of thought may be matter of dispute, but it is unquestionable that the Infinite and the Absolute are descriptive of inherent excellencies in that Being whom we reverently adore as Supreme, and are believed by us to be characteristic of His nature.

2. *The Infinite is not equivalent to the sum of all existence.* Our belief is exclusively in the existence of one Infinite Person, distinct from all creation, and above it all, the originator and sustainer of all. This being acknowledged, a large part of the reasoning in the German philosophy concerning the Absolute, falls to be set aside as irrelevant, and along with it disappears much of what Sir W. Hamilton and Dr. Mansel have penned. Every attempt to represent the Infinite as "the one and the many," or as "the sum of all reality," or as "containing the sum of all possible modes of being," or as "potentially everything, though actually nothing," must be simply denied as subversive of the necessary belief, which alone gives us any assurance of the existence of the Infinite. Sir W. Hamilton, in his reply to certain criticisms of mine, is found saying "that there is a fundamental difference between *the Infinite* (τὸ Ἓν καὶ Πᾶν), and a relation to which we may apply the term infinite." Now, this definition of the Infinite—the One and the All (τὸ Ἓν καὶ Πᾶν)—does not at all apply to the one Infinite Being in whose existence we believe. If this be the Infinite about which Sir W. Hamilton reasoned, there

is none such, and it becomes impossible to appeal to any fundamental belief in proof of its reality. Yet here too Dr. Mansel is found following in the same path, with such words as these: "The metaphysical representation of the Deity, as Absolute and Infinite, must necessarily, as the profoundest metaphysicians have acknowledged, amount to nothing less than the sum of all reality."[1] That the profoundest metaphysicians have speculated on this question, and have maintained the view asserted, I do not deny; but, when Dr. Mansel refers his readers to Spinoza, Wolf, Kant, Schelling, and Hegel, in proof of the assertion, every one sees at a glance among what class of philosophers the opinion has been maintained. For them, to reason about the Infinite and the Absolute, was to deal with mere abstractions, giving free allowance for forms of argument which do not bear the test of our fundamental belief, and which bring out their legitimate result at last in the declaration of Hegel that the Absolute is equivalent to *pure nothing*. It may be consistent for those who treat of the Absolute as a mere abstraction, involving the absence of all variety—the freedom from all relation—to reason as if it were tantamount to the *sum* of all reality, in which all things are absorbed and lose their identity; and then to show, as Hegel has consistently done, that all their reasoning applies to nothing. But, if Dr. Mansel indorse the opinion, it is inconsistent with his own definitions of the Absolute and Infinite,[2] and specially with his assertion of a necessary conviction that "the Infinite does exist, and must exist, and that it exists *along with the Finite*." If this do

[1] *Limits of Religious Thought*, p. 46. [2] *Ibid.* p. 45.

not mean that the Infinite exists apart from the finite, and does not contain the finite world in the sum of its being, it means nothing.

It is still more surprising to find our author quoting from Hegel to the following effect: "'What kind of an Absolute Being is that,' says Hegel, 'which does not contain in itself *all that is actual, even evil included?*' We may repudiate the conclusion with indignation, but the reasoning is unassailable."[1] In connexion with this passage, I do not here raise the question, whether, "if the Absolute and Infinite is an object of human *conception* at all, this, and none other, is the conception required." I shall not commingle different elements of discussion, as I should do by inquiring at this stage whether a conception of the Absolute and Infinite be possible to man; but I cannot forbear remarking that it seems to me unaccountably strange that an author, who maintains so strenuously that such a conception is altogether impossible, should so positively affirm what the conception must be, were it attainable. What specially requires consideration here, however, is, that this quotation introduced from Hegel, with the accompanying assertion, really involves a definition of the Absolute, and thereby trenches on the region of faith, on whose authority alone any trustworthy definition can be given. Though Dr. Mansel declares that, in the quotation from Hegel, "the reasoning is unassailable," most of his readers must have difficulty in discovering any reasoning in the passage. It is a simple attempt to impose upon us a certain definition of the Absolute in the form of a question.

[1] *Limits of Religious Thought*, p. 46.

It is a virtual assertion that Absolute Being must contain all actual being, which is inconsistent with Dr. Mansel's own definition of the Absolute. His words are these: "By the Absolute is meant that which exists in and by itself, having no necessary relation to any other Being."[1] Now, mere finite being cannot exist in and by itself, and cannot belong to the Absolute, and still less is it possible that *evil* should belong to such a Being. What kind of an Absolute Being would that be which could be declared to be *absolutely* perfect, yet embraced *all imperfection?* If the question be asked, "What kind of an Absolute Being is that which does not contain in itself all that is actual, evil included?" the declaration of that fundamental belief, whose existence in the mind I have endeavoured to point out, supplies the answer. That answer is most obvious, and very easy to state: He must be a Being perfectly holy, without any sin; a Being perfectly happy, without any misery; a Being absolutely perfect, that is to say, without any imperfection.

In a defence of this passage which occurs in the preface to the third edition of the *Bampton Lectures,* the author calls attention to the fact that he "designed to show that to speak of a *conception of the Absolute* implies a self-contradiction at the outset." That this is his meaning I have been specially careful to note; but what I affirm is, that the statement made, really involves assumptions concerning the nature of the Absolute, as well as statements concerning the characteristics of human conception. Moreover, it seems to me that the illustration which is given by way of explanation and defence, only brings out

[1] *Limits of Religious Thought,* p. 45.

the error more clearly, and makes the case worse. He says :—"Suppose that an author had written such a sentence as the following : 'A circular parallelogram must have its opposite sides and angles equal, and must also be such that all lines drawn from the centre to the circumference shall be equal to each other. The conclusion is absurd ; but the reasoning is unassailable, *supposing that a circular* parallelogram can be conceived at all.' Would such a statement involve any *formidable consequences either to geometry or to logic?*" What is the value of this illustration of the author's theory of human conception, I shall not at present inquire. But, is it not manifest that the reason why a circular parallelogram cannot be conceived, is that the thing is a contradiction in itself? Does Dr. Mansel then mean that an Absolute Being is as really a contradiction as is a circular parallelogram, and that philosophy and theology can suffer no more from reasoning concerning Him as such, than geometry and logic suffer from any reasonings concerning a circular parallelogram? This unfortunate illustration shows clearly that, with whatever success the author is reasoning concerning the conditions of human conception, when treating of the Absolute he is speaking of a mere abstraction—a "pure nothing."

In the whole passage in the Bampton Lectures, from which the above quotation is made, there is a covert contradiction of the definition of the Absolute, given only on the preceding page, and a manifest violation of the authority of faith, as it is acknowledged throughout the entire Lectures. What is written as applying to "human conception" comes to involve distinct assertions concern-

ing the Absolute as existing. One other example may be given, the criticism of which may be taken as indicating the objections I would urge, on the authority of a *fundamental belief*, against Dr. Mansel's mode of dealing with the subject in all those instances in which he revels among the apparent contradictions resulting from the relation of the Infinite with the finite. The extract which I am now to give is one which seems to involve the assertion that the Infinite is equivalent to the sum of all existence. "That which is *conceived as absolute and infinite* must be *conceived* as containing within itself the sum, not only of all actual, but of all possible modes of being. For if any actual mode can be denied of it, it is related to that mode, and limited by it."[1] I have put certain words in italics for the purpose of showing clearly that the author is treating of the conception of the Absolute, and, in so far as his words refer exclusively to such a conception, I do not at present touch them, though I must again marvel that one who maintains so stoutly the impossibility of any conception of the Absolute, nevertheless asserts so dogmatically what the conception *must be*, could we reach it.

But what is required at present is, to mark whether there be anything here inconsistent with our belief in the One Infinite Being, as distinct from His own creation. At first there is a very careful restriction of the assertion to a *conception* of the Absolute and Infinite, without applying it to the Absolute as existing, which is declared to be only the object of *faith*. But, when it is said that "if any actual mode can be denied of it (the Infinite), it is

[1] Mansel's *Limits of Religious Thought*, p. 46.

related to that mode, and limited by it," there is reason to inquire whether the author means this to apply to the Infinite as existing, and whether it is asserted on the authority of our faith, or is admitted to be completely contradictory of our faith. The statement is presented in such a manner as to convey to the reader the impression that, if the Infinite be *related* to anything not within its own being, it is *limited* by it, and it is this general principle, underlying much of the reasoning in the Bampton Lectures, which it is necessary to point out and condemn. If there be any truth in it at all, it must apply to the Infinite as existing, quite as much as to the Infinite as an object of thought; and anything more unwarrantable, on every ground, can hardly be conceived. If the distinguished author be not dealing with a mere abstraction, to be classified under the happy category of "pure nothing," is he prepared to change "the vague generalities" of the Infinite and the Absolute, for the name of the Deity, and try the sentence by simply reading it? This is the test to which every one of those numerous passages on the contradictions, springing from the relation of the Infinite to the finite, must be subjected; and, if this sentence be tried in such a manner, how can it be defended? "If any actual mode of being can be denied of God, he is related to that mode, *and limited by it.*" Our fundamental belief affirms the existence of One Infinite Being; that is, denies that any mode of finite being belongs to Him. Does it thereby limit God? Does it, in the same deliverance, declare Him at once finite and infinite, and thus contradict itself? Must the Infinite also be the Finite? Must the

Absolute also be the Relative? Must the Unconditioned also be the Conditioned? And all this that the absolutely Infinite may be absolutely Infinite? On the contrary, our belief presses upon us with unquestionable certainty the fact that God is infinite; that he is destitute of all finite modes of being, and, though related to all such, is not limited by them.

3. *The Infinite Being in whom we believe is not a Being of infinite extension.* The primary belief on which we rest for the assurance of the existence of the Infinite, is, as has been shown above, the belief in an Infinite Intelligence, and not in a Being infinitely extended, and possessing the qualities of matter. It is from the singular neglect of this fact, that speculations concerning the Infinite involve so frequently the covert supposition that the Infinite cannot exist in relation, as though finite existence could have no place for itself without restricting, and hampering the Infinite One. It is upon an essentially materialistic basis that all such arguments rest. The whole question must, therefore, be completely separated from all speculation concerning extension as such, if there is to be trustworthy progress towards a satisfactory solution of the difficulties connected with inquiries into our relation to the Infinite. Dr. Young, in his criticism of the *Bampton Lectures*, has very ably shown the false assumption concerning the nature of the Infinite lying at the root of much of the reasoning in *The Limits of Religious Thought.* Drawing the distinction between a "supposed infinite" in extension, and the One Infinite Being in whose existence we believe, and, maintaining that distinction under the designations of a *quantitative*

infinite, and *the qualitative Infinite*, he most successfully brings up to view the real answer to all those arguments which insist upon the impossibility of the Infinite existing in relation.[1] Our faith in One Infinite Being has no reference whatever to an infinite extension, and, as a necessary consequence, all Sir W. Hamilton's reasoning in this matter concerning an "*absolute whole*," and "*absolute part*,"[2] concerning a "*protensive quantity*," and an "*extensive quantity*,"[3] must be declared beside the question, however much it bears on abstract speculations that had been started by previous philosophers. For the same reason, I unhesitatingly maintain that "the Infinite is one and indivisible," whatever advantage the admission may give to Sir William in the criticisms to which he has subjected my arguments concerning a partial knowledge of the Infinite.[4] What knowledge we can attain of an Infinite Being, is not a question to be considered at this point. The fact to be noted now is that the Supreme Intelligence, who rules over all finite existence, is one and indivisible. Nothing can be conceived more materialistic in its tendency, more inconsistent with our belief, or more dishonouring to the Great Supreme, than to speak of the parts of His Divine nature.

4. *The Infinite Being, in whom we believe, does exist in relation, and is distinguished from all finite existence.* Many of my readers may think it needless to occupy time in presenting a statement so self-evident, but the necessities of the discussion require it. A great part, if not the whole, of the reasoning which has been em-

[1] *The Province of Reason*, pp. 72-82.
[2] *Discussions*, p. 13.
[3] *Discussions*, p. 606.
[4] *Lectures on Metaphysics*, II. 532.

ployed to show the impossibility of any knowledge of the Infinite, has been based upon the assumption that the Infinite cannot exist in relation, an assumption which is nothing less than a contradiction of an unquestionable fact. Both Sir W. Hamilton and Dr. Mansel admit that we must believe in the Infinite Being as existing in relation with His finite creatures, and yet both affirm that the Infinite cannot exist in relation. The contradiction is a glaring one, and there can be no doubt, which of the two contradictory opposites is to be cast aside as false. The authority of our faith cannot be gainsaid, and all these passages in which it is affirmed, or implied that the Infinite cannot exist in relation, must be set aside. Thus, when Sir W. Hamilton says, "that the Absolute, as absolutely universal, is absolutely *one;* absolute unity is convertible with the absolute negation of plurality and difference,"[1] the latter part of his statement applies to nothing whatever, and is to be set aside as essentially inconsistent with that necessary belief in one Infinite and Absolute Being, which he admits. So, in like manner, many passages in the Bampton Lectures on *The Limits of Religious Thought,* must receive the same treatment at the hands of justice, as manifest violations of the authority of our fundamental belief. Dr. Mansel is found saying that the Absolute "can neither be distinguished from the multiplicity of finite beings by any characteristic feature, nor be identified with them in their multiplicity. Thus we are landed in an inextricable dilemma."[2] The author may in this be carrying out a course of abstract reasoning, valid enough as based on

[1] *Discussions,* p. 33.

[2] *Limits of Religious Thought,* p. 50.

certain definitions, but this seems a wonderfully odd way of getting into a dilemma, and it is much to be feared that our author is the only one who is likely to experience in this case the peculiar sensations connected with such a position. If others escape, however, there is little cause for regret on his account, as he clearly has a certain delight in presenting the horns of a dilemma, and then writing "*inextricable*" between them. Dr. Mansel must admit that, in the words just quoted, he is writing about the Divine Being, or he is writing about nothing. If he be writing about nothing, then his words have no meaning whatever; if he be writing about God, he is contradicting his own acknowledgment of the deliverance of our primary belief,[1] by which the "inextricable dilemma" is made to disappear in the certainty that the Absolute Being is "distinguished from the multiplicity of finite beings." To take only another passage; what can Dr. Mansel mean by saying that "it is obvious that the Infinite cannot be distinguished, *as such*, from the Finite, by the absence of any quality which the Finite possesses; for such absence would be limitation." If the Infinite cannot be distinguished, *as such*, from the Finite, can it be distinguished from the Finite as something else than the Infinite? If the Infinite cannot be distinguished by the absence of any quality which the Finite possesses, is it the only way to escape contradiction, to say that the Infinite is finite? Such writing as this is indeed "word-juggling," which can never advance the cause of philosophy; and one thing is clear, that what is here said to be "obvious," is, beyond all possibility of question, false,

[1] *Limits of Religious Thought*, p. 120.

and declared to be so on the authority of a primary belief.

5. *It is possible for the Infinite Being to put forth power, and to act, while He continues unchanged.* In putting forth power, there is only an exercise of His own nature, and He does not thereby change either for the better or the worse. The transition (if such it can be called, for human language is inadequate to such applications) from one state to another, from non-activity in this particular direction, to positive action resulting in the creation of finite beings, involves no change in Him. And so in like manner His actions regarding His creatures imply no change in the Infinite One. *How* this can be, is not a question to be considered at present; but it is essential to mark at this point, that our primary belief in the Divine existence positively affirms the fact. Our belief rises into consciousness in connexion with the recognition of finite existence, and points to God as the First Cause, Sustainer, and Governor of all. It distinctly involves the assertion that God did begin to act, and does continue to act, while He is still Infinite and unchangeable. To affirm that it is not *as Infinite*, that the Deity acts, must be a contradiction, for though He only put forth a measure of power adequate to produce a certain finite result, all His actions must be those of a Being essentially Infinite. To affirm this, concerning the nature of the Being who acts, is nothing more than to say, that it is as an Infinite Being and not as a finite being that God acts. We are, therefore, by the authority of faith, debarred from all reasoning concerning the act of creation, or any one of God's acts, as though it implied a change in God

Himself, or the necessity "to pass either from the better to the worse, or from the worse to the better." In like manner, Dr. Mansel is unwarranted in his positive declaration that "a Cause cannot, as such, be Absolute: the Absolute, as such, cannot be a cause."[1] In these words, he may intend to speak only of what is involved in the *conception* of a cause, and of the Absolute respectively, but it involves a distinct affirmation concerning the *Absolute, as such*, that not only is unwarranted, but contradicted by our faith. Nay more, it is even inconsistent with his own definition of the Absolute. He says, "By the Absolute is meant that which exists in and by itself, having no *necessary* relation to any other Being." I accept the definition most unreservedly, but I add that so far from being a definition of something contradictory of a First Cause, it most distinctly applies to the First Cause, by which unquestionably "is meant that which exists in and by itself, having no *necessary* relation." To this it is answered that it is not the Absolute, *as such*, which acts as a cause, for "the Absolute, as such, *cannot* be a cause," to which I reply that it is most certainly not the Relative, as such, which acts as First Cause, and that it is the Absolute, as such, and nothing else; or, more appropriately, that it is the Absolute Being, in all his essential excellence, who acts as First Cause. This is the simple declaration of faith, testifying to a matter of fact; and, though acting as First Cause does imply a relation, it is not a "necessary relation," and, therefore, involves nothing inconsistent with the nature of the Absolute. The whole truth on this point is most simply and admirably put by Sir

[1] *Limits of Religious Thought*, p. 47.

W. Hamilton in these few words: "The Divine nature is identical with the *most perfect nature*, and is also identical with the *first cause*. If the first cause be not *identical* with the most perfect nature, there is no God, for the two essential conditions of his existence are not in combination."[1]

6. *Our belief in the Divine existence does not declare, whether there may, or may not be, a relation* within *His own being.* The deliverance of the fundamental belief implanted in our nature is, that the Absolute and Infinite cannot exist in any *necessary* relation to anything beyond His own being. In other words, the existence of some object beyond Himself, cannot be an essential condition of the Divine existence. But, if the question be raised concerning the possibility or impossibility of any relation *within* the essence of the Absolute Being, all inquiry on philosophical grounds must be stayed, for the deliverance of faith involves no declaration on the matter. With a just regard to the requirements of the inquiry, Dr. Mansel has embraced, in his definition of the Absolute, what I had omitted in the former edition of this work, namely, that when it is said that the Absolute is that which has no *necessary relation*, it is meant, that it has no necessary relation "*to any other Being.*" This is certainly an accurate statement of what we believe to be true of the Absolute; but we have no means of determining whether there may be certain essential relations within His own nature. We do, indeed, believe that the Divine Being is possessed of certain attributes, and in so far as the term "necessary relation" may be applied to these, it is no

[1] *Discussions*, p. 36.

doubt expressive of a fact; but the primary belief implanted in our nature does not conduct us to the recognition of any such essential relations within the Divine Being, as revelation has made known in the doctrine of the Trinity. Philosophy neither affirms nor denies anything concerning the possibility of such a relation. I hold, therefore, that Dr. Mansel has gone beyond the bounds of his own definition of the Absolute, and ventured on an assertion wholly unwarranted, when he says,—"Not only is the Absolute, *as conceived*, incapable of a necessary relation to anything else, but it is also incapable of containing, *by the constitution of its own nature*, an essential relation within itself; as a whole, for instance, composed of parts, or as a substance consisting of attributes, or as a conscious subject in antithesis to an object."[1] It is somewhat singular that our author, who argues so strongly that there can be no conception of the Absolute, should nevertheless so unhesitatingly affirm what is true of "the Absolute as conceived," and still further what must be true of the Absolute "by the constitution of its own nature." But passing this, it is distinctly contradictory of a necessary conviction in our mind to deny to the Absolute the possession of attributes, and, on other grounds, it is altogether unwarranted to assert, that the Absolute is "incapable of containing an essential relation within itself."

After having thus indicated the most important consequences that clearly flow from the acknowledgment of a necessary belief in the existence of the Infinite God, it seems necessary to glance at the chain of contradic-

[1] *Limits of Religious Thought*, p. 49.

tions said to be involved in the relation of the Infinite to the Finite. Dr. Mansel is distinguished for a very frequent reference to these, and remarkable facility in linking them together; but the reader of *The Limits of Religious Thought* may observe, that while the almost innumerable contradictions pointed to, are said to arise in connexion with the assertion of a conception of the Infinite, the statement of them is made to embrace certain distinct declarations concerning the Infinite as existing. One group of contradictions, from amongst the many given by Dr. Mansel, may be taken by way of illustration. He says: "The *conception* of the Absolute and Infinite, from whatever side we view it, appears encompassed with contradictions. There is a contradiction in supposing such an object to exist, whether alone or in conjunction with others; and there is a contradiction in supposing it not to exist. There is a contradiction in conceiving it as one; and there is a contradiction in conceiving it as many. There is a contradiction in conceiving it as personal; and there is a contradiction in conceiving it as impersonal. It cannot without contradiction be represented as active; nor, without equal contradiction, be represented as inactive. It cannot be conceived as the sum of all existence; nor yet can it be conceived as a part only of that existence."[1] I do not at present inquire what may be the bearing of all this on the question, whether it is possible for man to form a conception of the Infinite and Absolute; but, nothing can be more obvious than the fact that we are all able without the least hesitation to choose between the relative contradic-

[1] *Limits of Religious Thought*, p. 58.

tions presented in this chain. If we have any belief at all in an Infinite God, it must enable us to make certain affirmations concerning His existence, and that so distinctly as to enable us to pronounce definitely on any such array of alleged contradictions. Will our author consent to remove "the vague generalities of the Absolute and the Infinite," and employ, instead of these, "the sacred names and titles of God," altering the sentences to suit the difference in phraseology, and still stand responsible for the assertions they contain? Any man looking down the list can tell at a glance which of the respective alternatives he will accept as most certainly applicable to the Divine Being, and which he will reject as undoubtedly false. In fact, nothing more is necessary for this, than to read down the first clause in each sentence as distinct assertions, and thereafter the second clause in each, as certain violations of truth concerning the Deity, until the last sentence is reached, when both clauses must be set aside. The series of affirmations is nothing more than this: that the Divine Being does necessarily exist; has existed from all eternity, for an immeasurable period alone, and now exists in conjunction with finite beings; that He is one; that He is personal; and that He is active. I unhesitatingly deny the assertions that the Deity "does not exist," that He is "many," that He is "impersonal," and that He is "inactive;" and it is gratifying that it may be added, Dr. Mansel denies them all too.[1] In reference to the last sentence in the quotation given, it is to be observed that both clauses are to be rejected as containing assertions inconsistent

[1] *Limits of Religious Thought*, pp. 45, 120, etc.

with the Divine existence. God is not "the sum of all existence," nor yet is He "a part only of that sum;" and though I am not at present concerned with the question in what way we may *conceive* of the Divine Being, it may be remarked that it would be nothing wonderful if contradictions were found surrounding attempts to think of God *as He is not*, that is to say, to think of Him in a way which is contradictory of His own nature. To speak of the "*sum*" of existence, or of its "*parts*," is to speak exclusively of *finite* existence, as distinguished from the Infinite Being, for a "*sum*" implies "parts" of which it is composed, and a "part" implies a whole made up of parts. But all this has no application whatever to the Deity, who is necessarily separate from all finite existence, and immeasurably raised above it. It may be consistent enough to speak of the sum of finite existence which He has created, or of any part of that sum; but, to speak of Him as if He absorbed all His works in His own being, or as if He could be classified along with His works, is altogether inconsistent, as a manifest violation of that primary belief, on which all must depend for an authoritative declaration of the truth concerning the Divine existence. The contradictions which Dr. Mansel has so industriously accumulated have no existence whatever when brought to the test of faith. He says that "a contradiction thus thoroughgoing tells with *equal force* against all *belief* and all unbelief." Now, as I have been careful to indicate, I do not here inquire what bearing these contradictions may have on the operations of the understanding when attempting to deal with The Absolute; but I say that the professed thoroughgoing

contradiction tells with *no force at all* against our BELIEF in the One Absolute God.

In all declarations concerning the Infinite Being there must be uniform reference to the fundamental conviction of the mind as the test of their validity. The question, what do we *believe* concerning God, must always precede the question, how can we *conceive* of Him. A careful examination of the nature of our belief must, I apprehend, lead to the conclusion that it is a fundamental datum of consciousness, in other words, a necessary conviction of the mind, equally above all proof and all doubt. A searching consideration of what is contained in this primary belief in the Divine existence, reveals to us the only Infinite and Absolute Being—the one Infinite Intelligence, the Holy God, the self-existent, all-powerful First Cause, Sustainer, and Ruler of all finite existence.

CHAPTER III.

THE PROVINCE OF FAITH AS RELATED TO THAT OF KNOWLEDGE.

After having shown that the being of God is held by man on the authority of a primary belief, it becomes necessary to consider what bearing such faith has on human knowledge. Sir W. Hamilton and Dr. Mansel both agree that we *must believe* in One Infinite Being, and this admission is certainly one which must carry with it the most important results, when it is brought to bear on the question concerning the possibility or impossibility of any knowledge of the Divine nature. It is, however, a singular fact that both of these authors make comparatively small account of our *belief* in the Infinite, and do not even attempt anything like a formal exposition of the relation which subsists between faith and knowledge, if such relation there be. It is not enough on the part of any one, who seeks to carry out a complete investigation of this subject, merely to say that "the Infinite is, must, and ought to be believed." There are many important questions raised by such a statement, which require to be answered, if the ends of philosophical investigation are to be gained. What place does such a necessary belief occupy among the operations of the mind? Does it exercise any influence over other

mental operations, and if so, what is the nature and extent of that influence? More particularly, has it any part to fulfil in connexion with the exercise of our thought? Does it exist in consciousness, and exercise its appointed influence there, in harmony with the necessities of thought? If there be any apparent want of harmony between our belief and our thought, how is the want of harmony to be explained? Does our faith warrant to any extent a sure knowledge of the Infinite God? These questions, and many more besides, arise naturally so soon as we have admitted the existence of a necessary belief in the Infinite One. A careful examination of the nature of such inquiries shows that they may be embraced under two divisions, which shall, therefore, determine the arrangement of the considerations to be included in the present chapter.

I. The Province of Faith.—It is essential for trustworthy progress in the present inquiry, that there be an attempt at least to mark out by clearly defined boundaries the exact province of faith, in order to contemplate satisfactorily the relation in which it stands to that of knowledge. In this way alone is it possible to decide whether our primary beliefs are altogether separated from the sphere of thought proper, or really exercise an authority over our thoughts, determining their character, and, to some extent, their course of evolution; and securing a certain measure of knowledge in accordance with the actual nature of the object as it is revealed to us by faith. For the purpose of greater distinctness, I shall attempt to mark off the province of fundamental belief both positively and negatively, indicating first what it embraces,

and thereafter what it excludes. It is necessary to premise that in treating at present of the province of faith, I refer exclusively to that exercise of faith which is found in the consciousness of our primary or fundamental beliefs, among which I hold our belief in the Divine existence to be the most important. Faith may also find exercise in connexion with the facts of experience, or the inferences drawn from these ; but the illustrations now to be given of its province are intended to apply to those necessary beliefs which are implanted in our nature. Such beliefs, if they have any value at all, are nothing less than the foundation and guarantee of all our thoughts.

1. *What the province of faith includes.* It is the province of faith simply to affirm the *existence* of the object whose reality it declares, or assert the *truth* of the judgment which it imposes on the mind. It announces *that a thing is.* It arises in consciousness positively to affirm its own fact, and this it does without hesitating or halting, so long and so often as an appeal is made to its authority. When, therefore, we find a necessary belief in an Infinite God rising in our mind, the province which it occupies is exclusively that of affirming the existence of one self-existent, infinite, intelligent, and holy Being. It places this fact before the mind as a pure and positive assertion, which cannot be abjured, without wilfully violating the appointed foundation of all human reasoning. So far as it comes to us from our Creator in the form of a revelation, faith may be described as *receptive ;* in so far as it presents that revelation in consciousness according to the exigencies of our reason,

faith may be described as *declaratory*. It is in the former view that Sir W. Hamilton, when speaking of our fundamental beliefs, says they "are given us." It is in the latter view that he speaks of them as lying "hid in the profundities of the mind, until drawn from their obscurity by the mental activity itself, employed upon the materials of experience." In the former view, I agree with Dr. Mansel when he says that "faith, properly so called, is not constitutive, but receptive." I agree with him again when he says that "we are *compelled* to believe in the existence of a personal God," for this is only to say in another form that our primary belief comes into exercise as a simple assertion of the Divine existence.

If then, as is admitted, it be the province of faith to declare *that a thing is*, it is undoubtedly within that same province to declare *what the thing is*. These two are not identical, but they are necessarily connected, that is to say, the one cannot be without the other, and they are, therefore, to be found in every act of faith. The assertion that a certain object exists, involves a declaration concerning what the object is, else it could convey no revelation to the mind. When a primary belief rising in consciousness affirms that an object exists, it affirms the existence of a particular object, as distinguished from others, and the only possible way in which an object can be distinguished from others, is by a declaration of certain distinct characteristics of that which is revealed. When, therefore, it is said to be the province of faith to declare at once that a thing is, and what the thing is, nothing more is implied than the very simple and ob-

vious fact, that it is the province of faith to affirm the existence of a certain object, as distinguished from others. I do not say that faith declares to the mind *all* that a thing is, because nothing more is needful to secure the revelation of an object, than the announcement of such characteristics as suffice to distinguish it from others, but this much there must be in every belief. To deny this, were to deny the power of faith to make any revelation to the mind, and consequently to reduce every one of our beliefs to a nullity in human consciousness. Faith, as the possession of an intelligent being, must be an intelligent belief, else it can have no place in the mind, and no application there. If a primary belief testify to the existence of the Deity, it is not by any means necessary that it should declare *all* that is characteristic of the Divine nature, but it must at least affirm what God is, in such a way as to enable the mind to distinguish from all else, the one object revealed. This is a fundamental point, around which a struggle must be fully and fairly waged, by the defenders of the opposite theories concerning the Infinite.

Here, as it appears to me, is to be found one of the prominent fallacies in Dr. Mansel's reasoning. He broadly affirms that we have a necessary belief in the existence of the One Infinite Being, and yet he denies that this belief declares to us what God really is. He tells us that "Faith, however well founded, has itself only a regulative and practical, not a speculative and theoretical, application,"[1] by which he means that it is fitted only for our guidance, without involving any express

[1] *Limits of Religious Thought*, p. 146. On this point see Professor Fraser's *Essays on Philosophy*, p. 190.

revelation concerning the nature of God, or, in his own words, the highest principles to which we can attain "do not tell us *what things are in themselves, but how we must conduct ourselves in relation to them.*"[1] In this way he affirms that we are assured certain things exist, and that we are related to them, but what these things are, our belief does not testify. Or, to come to the particular point before us, he holds that faith reveals to the mind that God exists, and yet gives no testimony concerning what God is. In what, then, do we believe? Either in nothing, or in something. If it be in nothing, we have no belief; if it be in something, it is in a Being distinguished from other beings, and therefore revealed to us by what He is. If we have a primary belief in God's existence, we believe in Him as distinguished from other objects, and in doing so, we believe in His existence either as it is not, or as it is. If it be a belief in God's existence as it is not, it is not a belief in God; and if it be a belief in God's existence as it is, our primary belief declares not only that He is, but what He is. And yet Dr. Mansel maintains that faith does not tell us what God is. How, then, does he maintain his consistency? By scattering through his writings such assertions as these, that "we are compelled, by the constitution of our minds, to believe in the existence of an *Absolute* and *Infinite* Being;" and that "we are compelled to believe in the existence of a *personal* God." How does he affirm that God is infinite and not finite; that He is absolute and not relative; that He is personal and not impersonal, if faith do not testify that these are

[1] *Limits of Religious Thought*, p. 141.

essential characteristics of the Divine existence? If faith be simply "regulative and practical," how is it that he goes beyond the assertion that we believe in the existence of *some Being* whose nature is unrevealed, but whom we are to obey and adore, and upon whom we are to depend? To keep by such vague references to the Divine Being, I believe to be altogether impossible, and that because it is not true that faith is only "regulative and practical." In truth, faith is "regulative and practical" for us, only because it reveals an infinite, absolute, and holy God, and did it not make this revelation, it would be insufficient to regulate us in anything, or to guide our practice in attempting to serve Him.

A more inconsistent and untenable position I cannot imagine than that of Dr. Mansel, that "faith, *however well founded*, has itself only a regulative and practical, not a speculative and theoretical, application;" that it declares to us that God is, but not what God is. I believe that God is *infinite*, and that that is true of Him as He exists, as well as a truth "regulative" of my thought, and feeling, and action in relation to Him. I believe that God is *absolute*, and that that is true of Him as He is, as well as a truth "regulative" of my mind and conduct. I believe that God is *personal*, and that that is true of Him as He is, as well as a truth for my guidance in life. I challenge Dr. Mansel to produce the least shadow of evidence for his assertion that our faith does not reveal God as He is, but only declares what is enough for our guidance in connexion with the relation which we bear to Him. When he affirms that our faith in one infinite, absolute, and personal God, tells us only "how

we must conduct ourselves in relation to" Him, and not what is true concerning God himself, he must make this assertion either on the authority of some higher faith revealing what God really is, or without any warrant whatever. If he be able to declare that the testimony of faith does not reveal God as He really is, he can do so only by attaining in some manner to a superior revelation testifying to the real nature of God. He must have a faith in God as He is, which is speculative and theoretical in its application, besides the faith which is only regulative and practical. He must be able to compare the two, and on the ground of that comparison prove that the one is distinct from the other, before he can be warranted in asserting that our faith is only such as to tell us "how we must conduct ourselves." But in denying the possibility of a faith which reveals the Deity as He is, he contradicts his own assertion, and betrays his total want of authority for the declaration that faith is "only regulative and practical, and not speculative and theoretical." Faith is the declaration of what actually exists. Our belief in the Divine existence is the revelation of what God really is, carrying in itself its own authority, and assuring us that God is what its testimony declares. I appeal to the facts of our consciousness for a vindication of my statement concerning the province of faith, as embracing an authoritative declaration of the peculiar characteristics of the object whose existence it affirms. This is the only legitimate appeal, and I am satisfied that a careful prosecution of it places it beyond all dispute, that the declarations of faith point to distinct objects, and even Dr. Mansel himself

has been unable to avoid repeated acknowledgments that this is true of our faith in God. These are the facts involved in the act of faith; the declaration that an object exists, and that it exists in the possession of certain qualities or attributes by which it is distinguished from other objects in whose reality we believe. Less than this is not to be found in any act of faith, and, in truth, the want of either of these elements would render a belief in an object impossible.

There is, however, a certain restriction on the testimony of faith, which has been alluded to, but which requires more complete explanation; that is, the statement that faith, though declaring what the object is, does not necessarily reveal *all that the object is.* The application of what has been previously said concerning the appearance in consciousness of any primary belief, is enough to explain this. A fundamental conviction arises in consciousness, when the facts of experience, or the necessities of reflection, call for its application. Whatever, then, be the circumstances requiring the application of our belief in an object, faith will bear its testimony, in a measure proportionate to the requirements of the case. For example, if the problem before our mind be how to explain the occurrence of events above human control, which, nevertheless, are seen to determine the course and duration of human life, our faith may simply bear testimony to the existence of God as *supreme.* If, in the spirit of doubt, the mind raise the question, whether God may not Himself be under the dominion of some great controlling forces, our primary belief forthwith declares that God is *absolute.*

If we marvel over some startling display of the adaptation of means to ends in the world, our faith is a witness to the *infinite wisdom* of God. If we seek an explanation of the stupendous works of creation, faith gives its testimony to a God of *infinite power*. Thus it is, in perfect harmony with the law which regulates the rise of our primary beliefs into consciousness, that our faith in the Deity makes its declarations to the inquiring mind. This seems to me the true explanation of the fact that to many uninquiring minds, and among many heathen tribes, the belief in God appears to be little more than a belief in one Supreme Being; and the reason of this plainly is, that the facts which force themselves on their notice, and require an explanation, are those which present a hindrance to the fulfilment of their personal desires, or make them conscious of their obligation. It is easy to see from this, why that faith, which is the same in all minds, should, in the case of the unreflecting, appear as little else than a testimony to the existence of a Supreme Being. To very many this is the aspect which faith generally wears, and only at occasional seasons, when the mind is carried into some unusual current of thought, does it testify to the fact that God is infinite or holy. But of this there can be no doubt, that if the mind only seek the full explanation of things as they are known to exist, our primary belief will be found to involve the declaration of the being of one infinite, absolute, holy, and all-perfect God. And, if we contemplate aright the law regulating the rise in consciousness of our necessary belief, it must be acknowledged by us that the faith we possess may contain a still wider revelation of the Divine

nature, which only awaits an enlarged experience on our part to afford the occasion for presenting it to the mind. When we see what faith declares to those who exercise their intelligence enough to call for its wider applications, and how much more ample its testimony is to such minds than to those less reflective, it is impossible to say what nobler and wider revelation faith may yet be chartered to convey to men, were the sphere of their observation among the works of God only further enlarged.

2. *What the province of faith excludes.* In such a discussion as that now occupying our attention, any hope of establishing sound conclusions, and thereby advancing towards the discovery of acknowledged truth, must depend upon a clear distinction between the various operations of the mind included within the sphere of the inquiry. Where these are complex, and capable of being reduced to their simple elements only by a philosophical process, clearness of separation between one fact in consciousness and another, is to be sought after as a thing of special value. On this account, as well as from the obvious necessities of the discussion, it is of particular importance to mark off those mental processes, which are related to faith, and are concerned with it, while they belong to a province altogether distinct. This may be most readily done here by showing what is beyond the sphere of our belief.

(*a.*) *It is not the province of faith to vindicate its own deliverance.* When faith testifies to the truth of a certain principle, or the existence of a certain being, its declaration is not thereafter to be established by any process of reasoning for the satisfaction of the understanding. Faith

is *authoritative*, and admits neither of being doubted, nor of being vindicated, by reason. It imposes its testimony on the mind as unquestionable, and is by its very nature an express declaration of what really exists. A fact of experience is established by observation and testimony. An inference of the judgment depends for its validity on the certainty of the data from which it was deduced, and the accuracy of the process by which it was reached; but, a primary belief contains its own authority, and is simply to be accepted. It is not the declaration of a fact discovered by us, but a revelation given to us, which has the full sanction of Him who gave us our mental constitution.

When, however, it is said that a primary belief contains its own authority, it is necessary clearly to understand what is the kind of authority belonging to it. This is to be discovered simply by considering what is the nature of its own declaration, or, in other words, how it comes into consciousness, and what part it performs there. This, then, has already been established, that a primary belief is a simple affirmation that an object exists; as, for example, that there is an infinite and absolute God. When, therefore, it is said to be *authoritative* in consciousness, it is meant thereby to indicate that its testimony is indubitable. It has not the mere authority of a *law*, declaring what must be accepted by us in accordance with the conditions under which we have been placed. This undoubtedly it has, but also much more than this. It has the authority of a *positive revelation*, presenting unquestionable testimony concerning reality in existence. Its testimony is not in any way the product

of our conditions of thought, and capable of being altered or removed by an alteration in these, but a declaration of what really exists altogether apart from us. It is, therefore, not only regulative in respect of huma thought, but also true in respect of what is beyo thought. This being so, it clearly follows, that it is the province of faith to vindicate its own testimony, simply to impose its authority upon the mind, and po tively to affirm the reality of that whose existence reveals.

(*b.*) *It is not the province of faith to harmonize its own testimony with any other standard of truth.*) As our belief is simply receptive and declaratory, it is not within its sphere to reconcile its own deliverance with evidence coming from any other source. It is not needed for any such work, and by its very nature it is incapable of performing it. Difficulties may be raised by the understanding concerning what is involved in the nature of our belief, or more probably concerning what seems to be required by its application, but faith itself gives no heed to such difficulties, offering no explanation, yet not abating in the least degree the unwavering decision of its testimony. It may not be *able* to afford a solution of the difficulties, or to indicate the harmony between itself and human thought in its limited capacity, but to look for any such result would be to expect its operation in another sphere than its own. To accept and declare is the work of faith ; to compare and harmonize, must be the work of the understanding ; and the result in any case must be only such as the understanding can reach, which, therefore, cannot in the least

affect our belief, whatever influence it may have on our speculation. This is a consideration of very great importance as bearing upon subsequent points in the discussion, and I am glad to find the acknowledgment of from Dr. Mansel, in these words: "Faith alone cannot gest any actual solution of our doubts: it can offer definite reconciliation of apparently conflicting truths; r in order to accomplish that end, the hostile elements must be examined, compared, accommodated, and joined together one with another; and such a process is an act of thought, not of belief."[1] Faith is in itself a distinct standard of truth, it is not, and cannot be, the source of any of the difficulties which arise in the mind in connexion with its declarations; and it does not come within its province to give a solution of difficulties, which it has done nothing to raise. If contradictions are said to arise in connexion with the testimony of faith, as Dr. Mansel so frequently affirms,[2] they are the product of the understanding alone, in its attempts to regulate thought in harmony with the standard which faith gives. They must arise exclusively from attempting the comparison of some "idea," or conception of the infinite, with the conception of the finite, although this seems rather a singular exercise for one who continually affirms the impossibility of any conception of the Infinite.

II. The Relation subsisting between Faith and Knowledge.—Those who deny the possibility of any knowledge of the Infinite, seek in our belief a refuge from all the doubts concerning the reality of the Infinite.

The difficulty may be pressed in this manner: If the

[1] *Limits of Religious Thought*, p. 8. [2] *Ibid.* p. 58, *et passim.*

Infinite cannot be known, because it cannot exist in relation, how then can it exist at all? If the Infinite cannot exist in relation, it is equally impossible that it should exist, as that it should be known. It will be found that the escape from this difficulty is in every case effected in the same way. The defence is this: "When I deny that the Infinite can by us be *known*, I am very far from denying that by us it is, must, and ought to be *believed*."[1] The authority of our faith has been distinctly indicated in these pages, and I therefore acknowledge the validity of every appeal which is made to its testimony; but I thoroughly repudiate and condemn the attempted divorce between faith and knowledge. Is there a gulf fixed between our belief and our knowledge, rendering it impossible for the territory of the one to meet and harmonize with the other? Must our knowledge be constantly at variance with our fundamental belief? Must we be involved in endless contradictions and inconsistencies by the attempt to think concerning the Infinite; and, in order to escape these, must we be contented simply to believe in the Divine existence, without inquiring or reasoning in any way concerning his relation to us? Must the respective regions of belief and knowledge be involved in continual feud, so that the one shall spread out before us what is real, and the other present only a succession of treacherous quagmires, deceitful in appearance, through which we must stumble with unceasing confusion and anxiety? Is the mind safe only when it has abandoned all attempts to think concerning the Infinite God; when it has surrendered

[1] Hamilton's *Lectures on Metaphysics*, II. p. 530.

the exercise of reason altogether, and confined itself entirely to the exercise of faith? Is this the result of the conjoint possession of faith and reason, that "we are compelled by our religious consciousness, to believe in the existence of a personal God; though the reasonings of the Rationalists, logically followed out, may reduce us to Pantheism or Atheism?"[1] Does our reason necessarily lead us into error, and our faith alone save us from resting in the error? Is our understanding such in its nature that reasoning, "logically followed out," guides us to Pantheism or Atheism, whereas faith expressly declares that there is an Infinite and Personal God? Every one of these questions I answer most unhesitatingly in the negative. Consciousness is falsified, and not interpreted, when such results as these are said to be obtained from a comparison of the decisions of the reason, and the declarations of faith. The Philosophy is a false one, which finds reason and faith at variance. It is not a record of the facts of consciousness, but a contradiction of them. Knowledge and belief invariably harmonize, and even to a certain extent coalesce, but never contradict each other. Whenever a professed system of philosophy appears, declaring that thought and belief are contradictory, its unsound construction is to be accounted for, either by a misinterpretation of consciousness, or by a total neglect of it. In the latter case, the reasoning employed finds its coherence only from the use of *definitions* which apply to nothing, and of *symbols* which represent nothing, both of which involve a contradiction of faith at the outset. There

[1] *Limits of Religious Thought*, p. 122.

is sufficient warrant for pointing to many arguments, in which the Infinite, Absolute, and Unconditioned play the part of logical symbols, and nothing more, as illustrations of reasoning altogether at variance with the data of consciousness. Nothing can be more contradictory of the facts of consciousness, than to declare that thought, "logically followed out," leads to results inconsistent with the testimony of faith. Most heartily do I sympathize with Dr. M'Cosh when he says: "I grieve over the attempts for the last age or two, of a school of thinkers who labour to prove that the understanding or the speculative reason leads to scepticism and nihilism, and then appeal to faith to save us from the abyss before us."[1] I consider that the human mind is a harmonious whole, in which all the faculties work in concert; not a bundle of antagonistic powers, held together by some strange bond. It does, indeed, show traces of injury done to it, but even that injury has not betrayed any signs of antagonism between the powers originally communicated to it. My purpose, then, is to attempt to indicate the relation subsisting between thought and belief, and the harmony of their operations.

1. *Knowledge comes first in the order of time.* We start with knowledge in the earliest efforts of mental activity. Our perceptions, sensations, and self-consciousness are first in exercise, and give us the earliest elements of our knowledge. The knowledge here spoken of is knowledge derived from experience; and as it does not particularly apply to the subject of discussion, little more is needful than the simple reference to it. In this

[1] *Intuitions of the Mind*, p. 200.

knowledge there is embraced the recognition of self, and of objects distinct from self.

2. *All knowledge rests on faith.* There are in the mind certain fundamental convictions which regulate our powers in the acquisition of knowledge, and upon which our knowledge must rest for sanction, as they afford the necessary conditions for the exercise of the mind. These have been called "beliefs" and "cognitions" indifferently—a fact to which there will be particular occasion to refer immediately. But what is specially to be observed at present is, that knowledge becomes a firm and compact structure only by resting upon faith as a foundation. In the very exercise of its powers of knowledge, the mind rests on the belief that our senses and consciousness are trustworthy and not deceptive witnesses. In contemplating and comparing objects, all knowledge is accepted and arranged on the conviction that a thing cannot be and not be at the same time. Through all the varieties of thought, feeling, and volition, we believe in our own identity. Among all the changes continually occurring around us, we find order, and discover the mutual dependence of events, by observing and reasoning on the conviction that every change must have a cause. For the existence of the universe as known to us, we find an explanation only by resting on the great fundamental belief that there is one infinite, self-existent, holy, and all-perfect God. From these illustrations it is obvious enough that there is a measure of faith in connexion with all knowledge, affording to knowledge a firm foundation on which to settle. The facts of knowledge are *first recognised by the mind*, and

yet our fundamental convictions are *first in the mind*, affording the conditions necessary for the acquirement of experience. To adopt an old distinction which M. Cousin has illustrated and applied with striking ability, knowledge is *chronologically* first, whereas faith is *logically* first.[1] I perfectly agree with Sir W. Hamilton when he says,—"In the order of nature, belief always precedes knowledge—it is the condition of instruction. The child (as observed by Aristotle) must believe in order that he may learn; and even the primary facts of intelligence, the facts which precede, as they afford the conditions of, all knowledge, would not be original were they revealed to us under any other form than that of *natural or necessary beliefs*."[2] "Hence it is," he says again, "that our knowledge has its *commencement* in sense, external or internal, but its *origin* in intellect."[3]

3. *The province of faith is much more extensive than that of knowledge.* Belief affords a foundation for knowledge, and at the same time stretches far beyond it. Where knowledge stops, faith continues, affording to the mind the assurance of reality which is out of the reach of the understanding. Thought may advance far with its research, but at length it must discover its own powerlessness in attempting to struggle onwards. Even then, however, faith declares the certainty of much beyond the boundaries of thought, and the mind may be satisfied with truth which it cannot understand. If we contemplate faith in the twofold aspect indicated above, it will afford an explanation of its peculiar appearance

[1] See *Cours de Philosophie*, Leçon 17.
[2] *Lectures on Metaphysics*, I. p. 44.
[3] *Ibid.* II. p. 351.

when it is recognised as stretching beyond our knowledge. It may be viewed either with regard to what it reveals *to us*, or the authority it has *over us*. In the former case we are enabled to rest in the certain existence of much that we cannot discover by any research of our own; and in the latter we are compelled to believe in much that we cannot understand. It may be well at this point formally to distinguish this twofold aspect of the province of faith, as more extensive than the sphere of knowledge, for it has most important bearing on what is to follow.

(*a.*) *Faith leads the mind outwards to what is beyond knowledge.* The mind may contemplate the manifestation of power in the world. Beginning from some particular indication, it may strive to advance to a loftier and wider conception; it may advance far in its contemplation, but at length it must yield to the consciousness of its insufficiency for further progress; but even then, faith leads on the mind to the assurance that Divine power is infinite. We may direct our attention to the various influences at work in the physical world, and from these we may advance to the world of mind, and in relation to all we may contemplate the authority of God; but here, as everywhere else, thought can only advance to a certain measure, whereas faith leads us outward and onward with the assurance that God is absolutely supreme. Let us consider in this way, whatever manifestation of the Divine nature we choose, we are conscious of the province of faith spreading forth with a far wider expanse than that of knowledge. In this respect faith is essentially a revelation of truth,

which it is beyond the power of experience and reflection to discover; it is, in a certain sense, the supplement of what the understanding cannot complete.

(*b.*) *Faith authoritatively declares what the understanding cannot adequately interpret.* This is what is meant when it is said that we are compelled to believe much that we cannot understand. In the former case, we advance from the region of knowledge to the recognition of an outstretching province of faith: in this, we look back from the declarations of faith to the sphere of knowledge. When it is said that the province of faith is much more extensive than that of knowledge, it is implied that the sphere of belief is not only *beyond* that of knowledge, in respect of what it reaches, but also *above it*, in respect of the authority it possesses. It belongs to faith to declare what may seem inconsistent with knowledge, and it does so with an authority which compels submission, and requires the homage of the understanding. This it does solely because of the incapacity of the understanding adequately to interpret its decisions, and not because of any actual inconsistency between the facts of knowledge and its own testimony. And it is further to be observed, that the apparent inconsistency between faith and knowledge does not arise in the progress of the mind from the conceptions it forms concerning God, to its belief in the attributes of His nature; but in the attempt to reconcile certain distinct facts of knowledge, applying to other objects, with what faith testifies concerning God. For example, we know that man is free, and yet, on the authority of faith, we are assured that God is supreme. In this, then, the testimony of faith may

seem inconsistent with man's knowledge, but to say this, is nothing more than to affirm that the understanding cannot adequately interpret and apply what faith declares concerning Divine sovereignty ; whereas faith, by its very nature, implies that there is a harmony between the two, though the understanding fails to discover it. To take another example, we know that there is much suffering in the world, while faith declares the absolute goodness of God. Here also there may seem to be inconsistency, but this is nothing more than to say that the understanding cannot reach what belongs to the region of faith ; whereas our belief implies that there is harmony, though, as has been shown, it is altogether beyond the province of faith to reveal it. If the harmony cannot be reached by the understanding, it cannot be reached at all, and the same explanation applies in all cases—the region of thought is more restricted than that of faith.

In thus declaring that the province of faith is much more extensive than that of knowledge, I am but agreeing with what Sir W. Hamilton and Dr. Mansel have written on the matter, though it seems to me that they make a very imperfect and unsatisfactory use of the fact. What bearing it has on the present discussion may appear shortly, but it is important to mark the measure of agreement here. I gladly quote at this point what Sir W. Hamilton has written on the subject in his letter to me. He says : "The sphere of our belief is much more extensive than the sphere of our knowledge."[1] Dr. Mansel presents the same view in these words : "We learn that the provinces of Reason and Faith are not co-

[1] *Lectures on Metaphysics*, II. 530.

extensive; that it is a duty enjoined by Reason itself to believe in that which we are unable to comprehend."[1]

4. *The provinces of faith and knowledge meet each other, and are necessarily connected.* Faith and knowledge are not dissevered, as though these two elements in our consciousness were antagonistic, or even entirely independent of each other. Even though we advance in the sphere of knowledge until we become conscious of the impossibility of further progress, there is no such thing in the operations of the mind, as ceasing at that point, for the purpose of changing entirely the line of research—turning the mind round, and beginning anew in a totally different sphere of mental activity, without any consciousness of the relation subsisting between the two. Such separation could be maintained only on a materialistic basis, altogether inconsistent with the nature of mind. That knowledge and faith are so distinct from each other as to be capable of being separated in a process of mental analysis, is most certainly true; that they are so severed from each other as to have no mental coherence, is as certainly false. Viewed as mental operations, they combine, and often unite to form a single mental act; viewed in relation to the provinces which they occupy, the one is the complement of the other. Knowledge finds its resting-place on faith; while faith finds its application in *supporting* knowledge, by giving it a sure basis on which to rest,—in *regulating* thought, by the authority of its testimony concerning the reality of that which is beyond thought,—and in *extending* knowledge, by prompting the mind in its search after truth,

[1] *Limits of Religious Thought*, p. 96.

and affording the assurance that the search shall not be fruitless, if pursued in the direction to which it points. All knowledge, in recognising some object as distinct from our own personality, involves a belief in the trustworthiness of our powers of knowing; all thought is to be traced back to certain fundamental convictions on which it rests; and all inquiry proceeds at length from observation and reasoning to the belief of that which cannot be fully understood. I therefore hold it unquestionable that faith and knowledge meet each other, and are necessarily connected. Faith in part *underlies and sustains knowledge*, in part *stretches beyond it*, but in either case it is connected with it. Belief is really the basis of the mental operations. Knowledge implies dependence upon the adequacy of our powers for the discovery of what really exists; reasoning involves implicit confidence in the truth of the fundamental principles of reasoning, which we accept; and faith, in its highest and widest sphere, by assuring us of the reality of that which we cannot interpret and explain, gives the mind a quiet resting-place from the doubts and questions which it cannot solve.

5. *The provinces of faith and knowledge harmonize with each other.* The fact that they are necessarily connected in our mind is the guarantee for their harmony. There is no internal feud among the powers of our mind, or collision between the results to which their exercise leads. The mind is one, and in whatever direction its energy be put forth, its working is harmonious, and all its results are capable of being accurately arranged in their own appropriate position, showing the most

striking unity in all the variety. What is true concerning the whole, is at once apparent by a comparison of any two of the correlative provinces into which the phenomena of consciousness are divided. The more carefully we search, compare, and contrast the provinces of knowledge and belief, or reason and faith, as they have commonly been called, the more obvious this fact will become. A knowledge which, while it is the product of experience, leans upon faith for support, must needs be in harmony with it; and a knowledge which is stimulated and regulated by belief, must have its own harmony with that faith whose authority it owns. For the purpose of expounding how the provinces of faith and knowledge harmonize with each other, it is necessary to consider the facts just indicated, that faith in part sustains knowledge, and in part stretches far beyond it. These two facts lead to a twofold distinction concerning the harmony between knowledge and faith, which must now be stated.

(*a.*) *In so far as faith simply underlies knowledge, the harmony is clearly recognised.* Our belief may apply merely to the facts of experience, and in that case the unity subsisting between the two becomes a matter of consciousness. For example, take our belief in the law of Causality. A person may hear a loud concussion, which he necessarily believes must have been produced by some cause; and if he walk in the direction from which the sound came, when he reaches a quarry and discovers that a charge of powder had been fired for the purpose of blasting the rock, he is satisfied of the consistency of his belief with the experience which called it into exercise. If a spectator observe a dark shadow

pass over the surface of a distant mountain, he is convinced that there must be a cause for the phenomenon, and immediately when he lifts his eye and beholds the fleeting cloud, he is satisfied that the conviction implanted in his nature had not been deceptive. In all such cases, where faith simply underlies and sustains knowledge, the harmony subsisting between the two is clearly discerned.

(*b.*) *In so far as faith outstretches knowledge, the harmony may be only partially discovered, but cannot be questioned.* This maxim applies to our belief in the Infinite Being, in all its applications. It is universally acknowledged that, as applied to the Infinite, faith far outstretches the sphere of our knowledge, and there is, therefore, no need for raising any question here concerning the nature and extent of our knowledge of the Divine Being. There are differences concerning this question which must very shortly come under review, but they offer no obstruction at present, and may be left in abeyance till the next stage in this exposition. The admitted facts are these, that knowledge is always limited, and that faith reveals what is infinite. As has already been shown,[1] it is not within the province of faith to reconcile its own testimony with the facts of knowledge. To compare and harmonize belongs to the sphere of the understanding as such, but as faith reveals much which the understanding cannot adequately interpret,[2] it is manifest that there cannot be a *full harmony* obtained between our knowledge and belief. The understanding being limited, cannot reach to the measure of faith,

[1] See p. 111. [2] See p. 119.

and therefore cannot test the harmony of the measure of thought with the full extent of belief. But the understanding, by its very nature, searches for a harmony of the facts of knowledge and of the forms of reasoning, with the testimony of faith. In many cases it may recognise the signs of agreement, and, when it fails in the search, it is invariably conscious that the failure springs from the limitation of its own power. Here, then, come clearly out to view certain principles which are of the utmost consequence for the guidance of speculation concerning the relation of the finite to the infinite.

Knowledge, inasmuch as it is knowledge, may involve what is recognised as harmonizing with the deliverances of faith. What we know of the manifestations of God's power in the world, though very limited in comparison with what is to be known, nevertheless harmonizes in every respect, according to its own measure, with the declaration of our fundamental belief, which reveals an Almighty God. So in like manner, what we do know of Divine goodness and wisdom harmonizes with the nature of the Deity as the object of faith. That there is a harmony capable of being easily recognised by the understanding is obvious; but, at the same time, it is to be remarked that the harmony is necessarily only of such a degree as is compatible with the limited nature of our knowledge. But, as the understanding is often conscious of perplexity in its attempts to reconcile knowledge and faith, another principle affords the explanation of the difficulty.

Knowledge, inasmuch as it is limited, may not embrace all that is needful for the discovery of its harmony

with faith. This limitation is the single source of all the difficulties which arise in the attempt to reconcile the facts of knowledge, and the inferences of the understanding, with the revelation which faith makes. These difficulties must be manifold, and must appear greater or less, according as the facts and inferences seem less or more to approximate towards reconciliation. According as the lines of observation and reflection seem to diverge from the province of faith or incline towards it, the perplexities of the mind must vary. Like the traveller in the rugged highland districts, who finds, in pursuing the winding path, that his face is often set for one glen, whereas his destination is one altogether different; so it often is in the search for truth. There must often *seem* to be discrepancies between thought and belief; and this is nothing more than to affirm that thought is necessarily limited, and must raise many problems which are to itself insoluble. There is very much gained for the cause of philosophy by the acknowledgment that such difficulties must arise, simply because the sphere of thought is much more restricted than that of faith. The prominence which Sir W. Hamilton has given to this, is one amongst many excellencies for which the friends of philosophy must honour him. Let us advance as far as we may in the exercise of thought, we must still, as the result of every effort, come to admit the limitation of our powers, and be contented to rest in the testimony of faith for all that is beyond. At whatever point we stop, however, difficulties must arise, only to continue unanswered. But, it is to be observed that these do not in the least shake the authority of faith. They are the product of

the understanding alone, and do not in any sense come from the nature of faith, which, by the authority of its revelation, distinctly implies that every difficulty is capable of the most satisfactory solution, although it be impossible for our limited powers to discover it. This is the conviction upon which the understanding can rest, and be at ease, in presence of a startling array of insoluble problems. With an intelligent belief to lean upon, we can be satisfied that insoluble problems are so only to us, and not in themselves. There is sufficient warrant in the authority of faith, for believing that there is perfect harmony between the nature of the Infinite God and all the manifestations He has given of his glory. We may not be able to discover how God's unlimited knowledge and power harmonize with the communication of freedom to a large race of creatures, or how the Absolute holiness of God is to be reconciled with the permission of evil; but the fundamental belief implanted in our nature, distinctly involves the declaration that harmony does exist, though we fail to discover it. This is equally true concerning *all* the difficulties which arise from the limited nature of the understanding. The acknowledgment of the limits of the understanding, as a controlling principle in all speculation; a careful regard to the actual boundaries of thought, especially in every instance where it is concerned with themes stretching far into the unexplored territory of faith; and a uniform cultivation of reverence and humility in all inquiry, are alike essential for a true philosophic spirit, and the rightful acknowledgment of that God, whose glory it is our highest attainment to contemplate. With these con

siderations in view, it is equally important for philosophy and religion, to urge forward earnest inquiry, in the assurance that, if our powers be capable of development, the sphere of research is boundless; and, at the same time, to refrain from proud and dogmatic assertion of contradictions between the provinces of faith and knowledge, which cannot be adequately compared.

There are, therefore, as it seems to me, three fundamental maxims to be laid down for the guidance of all philosophical inquiry concerning our relation to the Infinite God.

(1.) *The harmony of faith and knowledge is to be sought to the utmost extent to which the understanding can carry us.*

This is the vindication of unwearying research, even as applied to the highest and grandest spheres to which the mind of man can turn. Certain difficulties we may legitimately hold to be *for ever* insoluble to us, inasmuch as their solution would imply a full knowledge of the infinite itself. But it is in the highest degree unreasonable to suppose, that research has already been carried to its utmost in any sphere, or that any one has attained to the exercise of the full measure of power appointed for man. If thought be exercised in submission to the authority of faith, it may be applied in any sphere, even the highest, and that with boundless scope for research. With faith as our guide, there need be no timid shrinking from reflection and reasoning concerning things divine, as well as human. I perfectly agree with Dr. Mansel in saying that reason is not without restriction, but I also hold that system in the highest degree un-

philosophical, which attempts to restrict the mind of man to the contemplation of what is human, to the exclusion of the truth concerning the Divine perfections. It is not, indeed, the province of human thought to attempt an impossible task, in trying "to remove the boundary which separates the comprehensible from the incomprehensible;"[1] but it is most certainly equally possible and warrantable to extend the region of knowledge still further into the boundless expanse of the unknown. Though it is not the work of human philosophy "to *produce* a coincidence between what we believe and what we think,"[2] it is most certainly the legitimate work of a sound philosophy to carry forward the *discovery* of that coincidence without wearying. I cast aside with surprise the assertion that "action and not knowledge is man's destiny and duty in this life."[3] Strange work it is in the annals of philosophy, to attempt the dissevérance of knowledge and action. A new ambition it is, to strive for success in inducing men to act without knowledge. Is intelligence of so little worth to man that unintelligent action is to be regarded as his "duty and destiny in this life"? Is it not rather clear that it must be stupid action indeed, which is action without knowledge? And, while it is the duty of man to believe much that he cannot understand, it must be very unsatisfactory action which proceeds on a faith which declares that God is, without revealing what He is. Faith, knowledge, and action have a common harmony, and they will be found most completely in exercise according as their agreement is discovered. The

[1] *Limits of Religious Thought*, p. 9. [2] *Ibid.* [3] *Ibid.* p. 149.

man who has reflected most patiently and solemnly on the applications of his belief in the all-perfect God, is the man whose action will be found most satisfactory, because he is the man who has most completely discovered the practical application of his faith. A man may, indeed, know much, and, from moral perversity, fail in the application of his knowledge; but it will be found that he who has reflected little on the testimony which faith presents, is far from satisfactorily fulfilling the part of a moral and religious being. If our fundamental belief reveal to us an Infinite and Absolute God, and our observation present the indications of His various excellencies, there is open for us a clear and safe method for extending our conceptions concerning the Divine Being. Were we altogether without compass, chart, or sounding line, we might hesitate to sail away into unexplored seas. Without any fundamental belief concerning the Divine nature, we might be constrained to restrict ourselves to the boundaries of the finite creation, and refuse to think or reason concerning the Infinite Being. But with a necessary belief to guide us, we may find exercise for thought, if it be prosecuted with the caution and humility befitting a theme so vast, yet with the earnestness and hope of those who are assured that thought is directed to grand and eternal reality.

(2.) *That which is clearly inconsistent with our faith, may be pronounced contradictory of the Divine nature.*

Every essential characteristic of material objects, and every imperfection or restriction belonging to what is essentially finite, may be unhesitatingly denied of the Infinite God. This our faith most clearly warrants, and

it is in this way that we avoid thinking of God in a manner inconsistent with His immeasurable excellence. Dr. Mansel strangely enough denies this maxim. He not only declares that we are unable to discover what God is, but warns us that "we are to beware of the opposite extreme," —that of mistaking "the inability to affirm for the ability to deny."[1] I submit that our author discovers a mental inability where none exists. We can assuredly take up one by one the degraded conceptions of the Deity held by heathen nations, both ancient and modern, and condemn them all, as inconsistent with the nature of the Infinite One, degrading to men, and destructive of all true religion. And notwithstanding his singular efforts unreasonably to restrict human thought, it is satisfactory to add that Dr. Mansel, as much as others, condemns the "Pantheism of India," and the "Polytheism of Greece."[2] All such reasoning as that which maintains that "no mode of being," not even the finite, can be denied of the Infinite,[3] is at once to be set aside as clearly inconsistent with our faith, and therefore contradictory of the Divine nature. Such reasoning deals only with logical symbols, and not with the object of faith, and really violates all truth, while it maintains an accurate logical form.

(3.) *That which is apparently irreconcilable with our faith, cannot be pronounced contradictory of the Divine nature.*

Objects not fully known cannot be adequately compared, and, therefore, cannot be declared contradictory

[1] *Limits of Religious Thought*, p. 146.
[2] *Ibid.* p. 151. [3] *Ibid.* p. 46, *et passim.*

of each other. If, for example, our knowledge embrace certain facts within our own observation apparently irreconcilable with the goodness of God, it is to be remembered that the infinite perfection of God is vastly beyond our comprehension, and that we are clearly excluded from making our inability to reconcile, a reason for declaring that a contradiction exists. When the distance at which an object is seen is such as to prevent the clear recognition of it, we are precluded from contradicting one who has visited the spot, when he says it is a tower, even though the apparent proportions of the object seem to us incompatible with the assertion. In like manner, all must be agreed that, since we necessarily come far short of comprehending the Infinite, it is unwarrantable in us to pronounce the seemingly inconsistent, really contradictory. This is clearly a general maxim for the guidance of all our thought concerning the Infinite. We may accept unreservedly whatever is embraced within the sphere of knowledge, but human knowledge cannot by any possibility be raised into a standard of all truth. Here I am at one with Sir W. Hamilton and Dr. Mansel. I agree with Sir W. Hamilton in all the importance he attaches to this maxim when he says,– "We are taught the salutary lesson, that the capacity of thought is not to be constituted into the measure of existence, and are warned from recognising the domain of our knowledge as necessarily co-extensive with the horizon of our faith."[1] Great indeed would be the advantage both to philosophy and theology were this truth rigorously applied. In no discussions is this

[1] Hamilton's *Discussions*, p. 15.

maxim of more importance than in those which concern the Infinite. A little consideration may show that it is enough to sweep away a whole host of those asserted contradictions, which have been so dogmatically affirmed as springing from the relation of the Finite and the Infinite. While it clearly prohibits the assertion of contradiction between objects not fully known, it is sufficient to indicate the limits of human thought, and mark out the point at which the sphere of the understanding terminates. Thought may advance indefinitely in its attempts to discover harmony between the province of the understanding and the deliverance of faith; but it cannot advance a single step towards the assertion of actual contradiction, in any case of apparent discrepancy.

6. *All faith implies knowledge.* The connexion between the two is necessary: it is, therefore, equally true to affirm that all faith implies knowledge, and that all knowledge implies faith. The latter position has already been established and illustrated;[1] it is the former which now requires consideration. What I affirm here is, that faith and knowledge are invariably united in consciousness. They combine to form a single act of the mind, and are separated only by analysis, which is the result of subsequent reflection. "Neither is faith without knowledge, nor knowledge without faith."[2] Belief in an object is possible only inasmuch as a certain knowledge or understanding of the nature of the object is possible. There may be innumerable objects in existence concerning which even faith can afford no testimony, simply because we

[1] See p. 116.

[2] *Clemens of Alexandria, Strom.* v. 1.

can form no conception of their nature. On this account, higher intelligences may have a much wider range of faith than we have, because of the greater powers of knowledge which they possess. But faith can exist in an intelligent nature only because of its possible harmony with the intelligence which that nature exercises. A belief can arise in consciousness, only if it be possible for the mind to form some conception of the object to which it points, and there can be nothing more inconsistent with the nature of an intelligent being than the supposition, that it is possible to believe in what is essentially inconceivable. Faith can be nothing to an intelligent being, unless it can guide the thought in seeking an extension of knowledge. This is another of the fundamental positions around which a battle must be fairly waged by the defenders of the opposing theories concerning man's knowledge of the Infinite. I maintain that that philosophy violates the most obvious necessities of our intelligence, which affirms a belief in an Infinite Being, while it denies the possibility of any conception of His nature. Sir W. Hamilton and Dr. Mansel have saved their reasonings from ending in scepticism, only by affirming a neces sary belief in the Infinite God; but, in doing this, they have overturned their own systems. Sir W. Hamilton has complained that I have done his reasoning injustice, by arguing that a denial of any knowledge of the Infinite virtually involves the overthrow of our faith in the Infinite. He says, referring to some points which he alleges I have not taken sufficiently into account: "The sphere of our belief is much more extensive than the sphere of our knowledge; and therefore, when I deny

that the Infinite can by us be *known*, I am far from denying that by us it is, must, and ought to be *believed*. This I have indeed anxiously evinced both by reasoning and authority. When, therefore, you maintain, that in denying to man any positive cognisance of the Infinite, I virtually extenuate his belief in the infinitude of Deity, I must hold you to be wholly wrong in respect both of my opinion and of the theological dogma itself."[1] Notwithstanding this strong statement from the lamented and venerated author, I still maintain that a denial of "any positive cognisance of the Infinite" virtually overthrows our belief in the infinitude of the Deity. But I am happy to accept, and formally to quote at this point, the assertion that the Infinite "is, must, and ought to be *believed*." Accepting this, however, only shifts the criticism to the opposite side, and now I maintain that Sir W. Hamilton's doctrine of a necessary belief in the Infinite God, with which I perfectly agree, completely overturns his theory concerning the impossibility of obtaining any knowledge of the Infinite. Where faith is, there knowledge is; and our belief in the Infinite God necessarily involves a knowledge of God as Infinite. I maintain that it is a fact in consciousness that faith is always united with knowledge, and that belief in an object is a mental impossibility without some cognisance of the object in which we believe. The two doctrines, that we believe in the Infinite, and that we cannot know the Infinite, are mutually destructive.

In looking for some vindication of the philosophic consistency of holding both doctrines, it is necessary to

[1] *Lectures on Metaphysics*, II. p. 530.

search the metaphysical system of Sir W. Hamilton for some evidence of the possibility of a complete severance between faith and knowledge. It is a singular fact, however, that in the whole course of his metaphysical system, the possibility of this is never formally considered. More striking still, in view of the above quotation, is the fact that, if his distribution of the mental phenomena be examined, it appears that faith has either no place whatever in the classification, or is included among the acts of cognition themselves. He adopts the Kantian distribution, which embraces the mental phenomena under the three divisions of Cognition, Feeling, and Appetency.[1] The first embraces the phenomena of knowledge; the second, of pleasure and pain; and the third, of will and desire. If, then, faith has any place in this distribution, it is to be found among the phenomena of knowledge. It is not only classified with these phenomena, but is held to be a certain aspect of knowledge itself. Here, then, it seems to me apparent that it is impossible to reconcile Sir W. Hamilton's peculiar theory concerning the Infinite, with his own distribution of the mental phenomena, adopted by him after a careful analysis of the entire sphere of consciousness, and without reference to this special discussion.

But every one who is acquainted with the writings of this distinguished philosopher knows, that the threefold distribution of the mental phenomena has not been adopted by him in total neglect of such a mental exercise as that of faith. Sir W. Hamilton is distinguished for the prominence he has given to certain necessary beliefs which

[1] *Lectures on Metaphysics*, I. pp. 183-9.

are found in our mind, and for his elaborate elucidation of their nature and vindication of their authority. It is one of the chief excellencies of his philosophy, that it has, with great power and clearness, vindicated these primary convictions as necessary and universal. When, therefore, he says that the Infinite "is, must, and ought to be believed," he simply places that belief among the fundamental convictions of the mind. Having seen that these are embraced, in his general distribution, under knowledge, the next inquiry must concern the position and relative influence which he ascribes to them among our cognitions. An examination of his classification of the cognitive powers shows that he considers all our fundamental convictions as the product of a special cognitive faculty, forming the sixth and last in his enumeration, and to which he has very appropriately given the name of the Regulative Faculty. His introductory remarks, illustrative of the need for admitting the existence of such a faculty, are these :—"The mind is not altogether indebted to experience for the whole apparatus of its *knowledge*, —its knowledge is not all adventitious. . . . But there are *cognitions* in the mind which are not contingent,—which are necessary,—which we cannot but think,—which thought supposes as its fundamental condition."[1] What, then, did Sir W. Hamilton understand to be the nature of the mental act involving the recognition of any one of those truths which "is, must, and ought to be believed"? The answer may be easily obtained from a glance at the large number of expressions which he employed indiscriminately as descriptive of these truths.

[1] *Lectures on Metaphysics*, II. p. 15.

He gathered from the writings of previous philosophers, and personally adopted and used, such designations as these,—"first principles, self evident or intuitive truths, primitive notions, innate cognitions, natural knowledges (cognitions), primary or fundamental laws of human belief, natural belief," etc. etc.[1] Here, then, the fundamental convictions of the mind are indiscriminately called cog nitions and beliefs, and that without any sense of contradiction. He says they are "intuitive cognitions, notions, judgments,"[2] inasmuch as they involve an immediate recognition of the truth. Again he says "these data are in rigid propriety, Beliefs or Trusts,"—"instinctive beliefs, cognitions, judgments,"[3]—inasmuch as they are inexplicable, or incapable of proof; and, to restrict quota tion, he says once more, "that the principles of our knowledge must be themselves knowledges,"[4] and hence he calls them "cognitions, notions, and conceptions." If faith and knowledge are to be held as distinct in nature, and as having distinct provinces in the wide range of mental operations, how is it that the first principles of consciousness admit of being designated by such apparently contradictory names as beliefs and cognitions? It is simply because of the fact which I have indicated above, that knowledge and belief combine to constitute the single mental act. Let men treat of the first principles of the mind, and they cannot fail to speak of them, now as cognitions, and again as beliefs, for both elements are found mingling in the one operation of the mind. As Sir W.

[1] *Lectures on Metaphysics*, II. p. 350; see also, in Reid's works, Hamilton's *Dissertation on the Philosophy of Common Sense*.

[2] Hamilton's Reid, p. 759.

[3] *Ibid.* p. 760.

[4] *Ibid.* p. 763.

Hamilton has very accurately indicated,[1] they have their light side and their dark. They afford to us a certain measure of light, and in that respect they communicate knowledge ; they fail to show the mind how they are to be accounted for, and in that respect they are acts of faith. While they are beliefs, they reveal what is true ; and while they reveal truth, they neither vindicate nor explain their own revelation.

In perfect consistency with the representation which Sir W. Hamilton has given of the nature of our fundamental convictions, is the explanation he gives of their relation to other cognitions. He says : " These native, these necessary cognitions, are the laws by which the mind is governed in its operations, and which afford the *conditions of its capacity of knowledge.*"[2] They are " necessary laws, or primary conditions of intelligence." Thus our author admits that they have a value to man, only in so far as they involve a revelation of truth, which suffices for the guidance of the mind in the extension of its knowledge. In this Sir W. Hamilton most clearly, and most truly, as the great majority of thinkers will admit, affirms that all faith implies knowledge. By the very same process he overturns the unphilosophical assertion of Dr. Mansel, in saying that " faith, however well founded, has itself only a regulative and practical, not a speculative and theoretical application ;" that " the highest principles of thought and action" " do not serve to satisfy the reason, but to guide the conduct ; they do not tell us what things are in themselves, but how we must conduct

[1] Hamilton's Reid, p. 760.

[2] *Lectures on Metaphysics*, II. p. 15.

ourselves in relation to them."[1] It may well be cause for wonder how "the highest principles of thought" nevertheless fail to regulate thought; and surely action without knowledge must be unintelligible and irrational. I have already shown the untenable nature of the doctrine, that faith reveals that a thing is, without revealing what the thing is. And now, it must be manifest that, if faith testify to the reality of a certain object, it cannot do so without involving a knowledge of the object. That faith has a *regulative power* in the mind no one can deny, but to speak of it as regulating action, without regulating thought, is a philosophical inconsistency. Further, if our faith apply only to action without applying to thought, we can never know that our conduct is in harmony with our faith; and, without this, faith is useless, even according to Dr. Mansel's own showing, and loses its power over the conduct. In order that faith may regulate the conduct, we must be able to compare our actions with our belief; and, in order to make such a comparison, we must as truly know what our faith reveals, as what our action is; and, if we can have such knowledge, and apply it in such a way, Dr. Mansel's attempt to show that faith has "only a regulative and practical, not a speculative and theoretical application," altogether fails. To try to regulate the conduct, even by the very best standard, without the aid of thought, is a hopeless task. If this be the last resort for escape from the philosophical necessity of admitting that we have a knowledge of the Infinite Being in har-

[1] On this theory there is a singularly able and successful criticism in *A Letter to the Rev. F. D. Maurice on some points suggested by his recent criticism of Dr. Mansel's Bampton Lectures.* By the Rev. C. P. Chretien, M.A., pp. 15-32.

mony with our faith, it is most obviously a failure. Faith is practically nothing to an intelligent being, except in so far as it operates through the intellect; and the only consistent position on the subject is that which Sir W. Hamilton maintains, in direct opposition to Dr. Mansel, that our fundamental convictions are "the laws by which the mind is governed in its operations, and which afford the conditions of its capacity of knowledge." If our faith be regulative and not speculative, as Dr. Mansel affirms, then all our thought is false, and all action based upon it is wrong—an assertion which is obviously self-destructive; and further, if faith be regulative only of action and not of thought, as Dr. Mansel affirms, it must ever remain impossible to compare our action with our belief; and this again is a doctrine which is self-destructive. The theory of the Bampton Lectures on the *Limits of Religious Thought* is saved from scepticism only by its doctrine of faith; and if that doctrine is broken down, the bridge is gone which delivers it from the hopeless abyss. There is but one way of escape, and that is a reversal of the peculiar doctrine of faith which has been maintained, and a consequent surrender of all that has been written concerning the impossibility of a knowledge of the Infinite, and man's inability to think and reason concerning it.

But how does Sir W. Hamilton secure his consistency? He has taken up a different position concerning the nature and authority of faith from that of Dr. Mansel, and his position I consider unassailable: but does he thereby escape philosophical inconsistency, involving the overthrow of his own special theory concern-

ing a knowledge of the Infinite? I consider that by his appeal to a necessary belief in the existence of the Infinite God he has saved his system from scepticism, but, at the same time, has laid level with the dust all the imposing and elaborate structure which he has reared to prove that the Infinite is incognisable and inconceivable. He has maintained that the fundamental principles of the mind are at once beliefs and cognitions; that they bear so essentially the character of cognition, that they are to be classified among the phenomena of knowledge, and attributed to a special cognitive faculty; that they are "the primary conditions of intelligence; and, therefore, that the principles of our knowledge must themselves be knowledges." Now, he declares that our belief in the Infinite Being is one of the fundamental principles of the mind, which is not the fruit of observation, but bears all the marks of a necessary belief. "The Infinite is, must, and ought to be believed." It therefore follows that the belief in the Infinite is to be included, under his system, among the phenomena of knowledge; that it is to be regarded as a cognition as truly as a belief; that it must govern the operations of the mind in relation to the Infinite; and that, being a principle of knowledge, it must itself be a knowledge of the Infinite. Here, then, is the complete destruction, by the author's own hand, of all that he has written to prove that the Infinite, though the object of faith, cannot be known. There is no escape from such inconsistency on the part of any one who denies a knowledge of the Infinite, save by a denial of our faith in the Infinite, thereby landing in scepticism. But Sir W. Hamilton expressly declares such a denial of

faith impossible; and, if his system of philosophy is to be accepted, our belief in the Infinite must be classified among our cognitions, and be held really to involve a knowledge of the object believed.

There is, indeed, one dogma of the Hamiltonian philosophy which is thought to provide an escape from the difficulty; but a very little consideration is enough to show its complete insufficiency. I refer to the doctrine concerning "Negative Thinking," which has been so much insisted on in connexion with this subject. It is said that the Infinite cannot be positively known, and, at best, is only the object of negative thought. If, then, the question be raised, what is the nature and relation of this negative thinking concerning the Infinite? there seems an established order of reply from which there can be no deviation. "Thinking is *negative* when *existence* is not attributed to an object." Negative thinking is, therefore, "in propriety, a negation of thought;" but it would be a mistake to suppose that a negation of thought is therefore "a negation of all mental activity," for it is an attempt to think, and a failure in the attempt. This is obviously no thinking at all, and "the result is,— Nothing;" but, as nothing can rest on something, this "Nothing," otherwise designated "Negative Thought," rests on a necessary belief in the Infinite Being.[1] This is the circle round which every critic of the philosophy of the conditioned is made to course, as though it contained an answer to all difficulties which can be raised. But when it is admitted that our necessary

1 Compare *Discussions*, p. 602, and *Lectures on Metaphysics*, II. p. 530. Letter to the author, section second.

belief in the Infinite is itself a cognition; that, being a principle of knowledge, it is itself a knowledge of the object revealed, the circle is broken, and placed out of account as beside the question.

It has already been shown,[1] that a fundamental principle rises into consciousness only when the necessities of experience are such as to require its application; and it is so with our belief in God, which implies a certain knowledge which is the product of experience, and a knowledge which is not. We have a knowledge of God which is mediate, and a knowledge which is immediate.[2] In connexion with a single act of observation involving the simplest evidence of design, as for example the growth of a blade of grass, the belief in the Infinite Being arises, embracing an immediate knowledge of God. The very simple act of observation is accompanied in the mind by a belief and knowledge, which cannot be explained except by granting that they are original. Our faith is clearly not the product of an inference, and our knowledge is certainly not the fruit of observation. The faith and knowledge spring up from within, and are embraced in a single act of mind. The one is a fundamental belief and the other is an immediate knowledge. This knowledge every man has, however restricted his intelligence, if he only exercise his faith in the Divine Being, for it is the necessary complement of his faith. Besides this, however, we may extend our observation among the works of God; and, tracing in these the marks of power, and wisdom, and goodness, we obtain a mediate

[1] See p. 43.

[2] For the distinction between knowledge, mediate and immediate, see Chapter V.

knowledge, which is the product of experience. This knowledge enlarges as our research extends, and with its expansion there is a conscious increase in the distinctness of our immediate knowledge. The mediate knowledge gained by observation is enlarged by research and scientific inquiry, and the harmony between the results of the exercise of the understanding in this way, and the direct knowledge given in our primary cognition, is seen in this, that the more *widely* the former is extended, the more *distinctly* the latter shines. It is necessary to contemplate both of these aspects of our knowledge of God in their order.

Our necessary belief in the Infinite Being involves a direct or immediate knowledge. I hold it to be true concerning our belief in the Absolute God, what Sir W. Hamilton has shown in a general way concerning all our primary beliefs, that it is in itself a cognition, or, in other words, involves an immediate knowledge of the Deity, for as a principle of knowledge it must itself be a knowledge. In this, I maintain, we have a cognition of the Infinite One, not drawn from observation and reflection, but completely above both; not obtained by a distinct faculty, but given to us in our primary belief, and necessary in order that faith may be the possession of an intelligent being. By our necessary belief it is expressly involved that the Infinite is not incognisable. In this it is, that "our highest idea of the Deity" is given us; in this are found our "conceptions" of the Infinite and Absolute, which have afforded the origin and basis of all the discussion that has been raised in connexion with this question. Our faith affords us a higher know-

ledge than our limited experience of the works of God ever can give, and a knowledge which nevertheless unfolds only as the necessities of experience require. This is the law which regulates the rise of our fundamental belief itself, and it is also the law which determines the development of the knowledge given in that belief. For as our faith may operate more or less powerfully in the regulation of our thought and action, so the cognition involved in that belief may be more or less distinct, and may, in order to meet the demand of enlarged observation and extended reflection, come out with more decided clearness. The light which is in faith may thus shine forth with increased brightness, while faith still retains its dark side, testifying to the reality of much which the light does not reveal. The light is such as can shine within the compass of our limited intelligence, brightening and diffusing more widely, according as our observation and reflection enlarge its appointed sphere. It is sent into the mind through faith, as through a doorway, testifying to the existence of undiscovered and immeasurable brightness beyond; and though it be a narrow stream as it shines forth upon us, it is the true light which comes direct from the glorious God himself.

This knowledge is, and can be, nothing but a knowledge of the object which faith reveals, yet it is to be observed that it is a limited, and therefore imperfect, knowledge.[1] It is such as an intelligent being must have of the object of belief, since it is impossible to believe in the existence of an object of which we can have no conception: it is, as has been said, a knowledge

[1] See Professor Fraser's *Essays in Philosophy*, p. 195.

capable of unfolding within the mind, and however far it extend it still leaves a dark side to our faith. It is in truth capable of indefinite expansion without reaching to the full measure of our belief. But it is a knowledge of the Infinite God to whose existence faith bears testimony. When, however, it is said to be limited, it is not meant that it is embraced within certain clearly marked boundaries; nor can its outlines be laid down like those of a logical conception, which can be measured and its exact contents described. It bears no analogy to such logical conceptions as those of "man," "ruler," or "angel," which by their nature involve the combination of a definite number of clearly distinguished individuals, to the exclusion of others. It is no product of the logical faculty, and is not to be tested and criticised by logical rules. Whatever reasoning may be deduced from it is subject to the necessary laws which regulate all reasoning, but there is a total misconception concerning the nature of this knowledge on the part of any one who insists that it must be embraced in a conception clearly rounded off, or brought within certain complete boundaries. I perfectly concur with Professor Fraser, when he says that "philosophy and theology, in as far as they are regions of faith, and yet regions of mystery, can neither, on the one hand, be wholly consigned to the unknown, nor, on the other hand, be conquered by reasoning."[1] Our knowledge is indeed limited, but it is as real, as trustworthy, as authoritative, as our faith is, and the two must stand or fall together. No valid argument can be taken against this know-

[1] *Essays in Philosophy*, p. 195.

ledge on the ground that it is limited, for, as the author just quoted very well observes, "faith may consist with an imperfection of knowledge," but it will tax the ability of any philosopher to show how we can believe in an object of which we can know nothing. The reality of that knowledge which is here maintained must be tested by a simple examination of consciousness, and if its existence be admitted, its validity can be questioned only by means of a higher knowledge, or by showing that this imperfect knowledge is contradictory of our faith, both of which are impossible.

Further, we find in the works of God, illustrations of His revealed attributes. It is in connexion with the contemplation of these that we find at once the application of our fundamental belief, and the unfolding of that primary knowledge which is involved in it. Every thing which God has created or done must be a manifestation of His nature to His intelligent creatures. We are capable of observing and comparing the works of God, and by this means we are able to form certain conceptions not only concerning these works themselves, but also concerning the Being by whose agency they have been originated ; and if in all our observing, forming of conceptions, and reasoning upon them, we only regulate the mind in submission to our necessary belief, our observations, conceptions, and reasonings will all involve a discovery of truth concerning the Divine nature. It is indeed clear, that the works of God are only a limited manifestation of His nature, and therefore equally clear, that by means of these we can only obtain a limited knowledge, but it is impossible on that account to deny that we reach a

positive knowledge of the Infinite God. As well may it be argued, because God's works are limited, therefore they can involve no manifestation of the Infinite One; as reason that because human thought is finite, therefore it can embrace no knowledge of the Deity. It is not wonderful, however, that as the latter position has been so strongly maintained, the former should also be asserted. Consistency in logical "word-juggling" naturally requires it. Dr. Mansel accordingly meets us with the assertion that it is not as the Absolute that God creates. This he does in these words: "A cause cannot, as such, be Absolute: the Absolute cannot, as such, be a cause."[1] If this be true, what follows? Either in creating, God has ceased to be Absolute; or, God has not created at all. Dr. Mansel must choose one of these alternatives. If God has created, He has given a manifestation of Himself in a finite creation. If so, what follows? Either God has revealed Himself in His works, as He is; or, He has revealed Himself, as He is not: His works are not in accordance with His nature, and we are deceived. The learned author of *The Limits of Religious Thought* must take one of these alternatives. Or will he say, that he need not adopt either? Will he maintain that there is another alternative, and that God has revealed Himself, neither as *the finite*, nor as *the Infinite?* Then, as what has He revealed Himself? What is there between these two? The assertion that the Absolute cannot as such be a cause, is in direct violation of Dr. Mansel's own definition of the Absolute. He says that "the Absolute is that which exists in and by itself, having no *necessary relation* to

[1] *Limits of Religious Thought*, p. 47.

any other Being." He admits that the Absolute may exist in relation if it be not a necessary relation, and therefore God may exist in the relation of cause to a finite creation. If God has created, His works of creation have been performed in harmony with His own nature, and a finite creation is a manifestation of the Infinite God to His intelligent creatures.

Our observation of the works of creation is not prosecuted for the purpose of rising by slow stages to the conviction of the Divine existence. Our belief, as necessary, arises by the simple contemplation of any object.[1] We therefore start with the conviction that there is One Infinite Being, and all our observation is prosecuted for the purpose of enlarging our knowledge of His nature. In this we must be continually regulated by our fundamental belief, which, as we have seen, involves an immediate knowledge of God. With it to guide us, we are saved from attributing the marks of power, or of wisdom, which we behold in the world, to a Being possessed only of the measure of power or wisdom needful for the accomplishment of these results. Among all the works of nature, our observation presents to view nothing more than the finite, and the only reason why we believe in an Infinite Being, or look on the objects around us as the works of such a Being, is that the recognition of the Infinite One is given us in our very nature. This alone explains why it is that the finite creation is not attributed to a finite cause, or why we do not think of God, only as a being able to accomplish all that we see around us. Whatever exercise of our logical faculty there may be

[1] See previous Chapter.

upon the works of God, leading to the formation of certain conceptions concerning the Divine nature, is regulated by a primary belief which is completely above the logical faculty, and not liable to be tested and criticised by its rules. This being kept in view, the way is clear for a consideration of the legitimate exercise of human thought in connexion with this subject.

In the entire works of God, the logical faculty finds a basis from which it may rise up to meet the declarations of faith. Since by the authority of an original belief within us, testimony is borne to the existence of one Infinite Originator of all finite existence, man as an intelligent creature must seek to form clear and satisfactory conceptions in harmony with his faith. Every form of existence is to him a field of inquiry in which to learn somewhat of the Great Being who has created all. While our nature may involve a revelation concerning the Divine existence and attributes, we must discover, arrange, and interpret for ourselves the facts which are disclosed in the works of God. This is the province of the logical faculty; and by earnest, laborious efforts we must seek to extend our study, and gather for ourselves new conceptions of the Divine glory, that will call forth more fully the light shining from within. It is to be observed, however, that there are here two distinct lines of contemplation which the logical faculty may pursue—*firstly*, what the facts of nature are; and *secondly*, what the facts of nature teach concerning the great Creator. These two are quite distinct, and may be so completely separated, that the first may be considered without the least regard to the second; but the second can be prosecuted, only

in the degree in which the first is pursued. The first leads to the discovery and classification of certain facts, which go to constitute a body of scientific truth ; the second, making use of these classified facts, rises by their aid to the formation of certain conceptions concerning the Infinite Creator. In this way Science is the handmaid of Philosophy and Religion. The deeper we carry our research into the wonders which nature discloses, the farther do we extend our acquaintance with the works of God, and accumulate the materials that enable us to enlarge our conceptions of the Divine attributes. In this way we can re-classify for ourselves facts from all the sciences, according as they present marks of the power, or the wisdom, or the goodness of the Infinite Creator. We can thus form separate conceptions of the power, wisdom, and goodness of God, and, gathering all these together, we can form a conception, the most grand and awe-aspiring, of the Infinite and Absolute Being.

Here, as everywhere else, there is a reward for careful and wide observation and reflection. By means of these, more extended, accurate, and impressive views of the Deity are reached, than are ever attained by those who lack the spirit of inquiry, or are contented to leave it unsatisfied. As the study of the works of the Creator is prosecuted, faith shines more clearly on the intellect, and makes the discovery of truth more easy and satisfying. To use the language of Malebranche, as quoted by Sir W. Hamilton, "faith is a gift of God, which we earn not by our merits ; but intelligence is a gift usually only conceded to desert. . . . For without the labour of attention, we shall never comprehend the grandeur of religion, the

sanctity of morals, the littleness of all that is not God. . . . It is true that faith guides and supports, but it does so only as it produces some light by the attention which it excites in us."[1] There is a knowledge given in faith, and that knowledge is at once primary and ultimate. With it we start in all our observation; by it we are guided in the entire course of reflection; and in it we still rest at the end. In the study of God's works we trace the marks of His power, and, gathering all that comes under notice, we form an enlarged conception of the marvellous power of the Creator. Thus, through the works of God, we attain a mediate knowledge of the Deity himself; or rather, in the facts of nature we find illustrations confirmatory of the primary knowledge already possessed. Since, however, all observation voluntarily prosecuted must follow a certain method, we are led to a conception of the various attributes of Deity apart, such as wisdom, goodness, holiness. By a subsequent and more general process, we are able in some measure to gather these conceptions into one, thereby obtaining the notion of the one God. This is a conception which may be more or less frequently present, according as the mind is interested in it, whether from an intellectual, moral, or religious impulse, and may be found rising in consciousness with some one attribute more prominently regarded, in harmony with the special relation in which the general notion has been brought into consciousness.

As, therefore, our faith is regulative of all our reflections concerning the perfections of the Deity, and as that

[1] *Lectures on Metaphysics*, I. p. 260.

faith involves a primary knowledge of His nature, it affords a basis from which to reason accurately concern ing God. This is the natural and legitimate deduction from what has been already maintained. Dr. Mansel insists upon the very opposite opinion, as the whole structure of his theory requires him to do. He maintains that we have neither the ability to affirm, nor the ability to deny anything concerning God.[1] He believes in a personal God, but he is terrified at the thought of venturing on the slightest effort at reasoning concerning His nature. His belief is no guide to his intelligence, and if he wanders into the labyrinth of rationalistic reasoning, he cannot find any method of escape ; but, as the last resort, he cries out that we should not reason concerning what our faith reveals. He is bold in declaring our belief in a personal God ; but when he falls into the hands of a rationalist, he can only surrender at discretion, saying that "the reasonings of the rationalist, logically followed out, may reduce us to Pantheism or Atheism."[2] The rationalist may reason in either of the ways he feels inclined to adopt, and the lamentable conclusion is, that his logic is unanswerable, whether he concludes that all things are God, or that there is no God at all. Dr. Mansel cannot answer ; he can only deny the right of man to use his reason concerning the nature of the God who gave it. The only defence which he has against the wildest rationalism is that, which denounces as equally unwarrantable the most "sober and reverent" reasoning concerning the nature of God. His distinctive ground is, "that our indirect *belief* in the

[1] *Limits of Religious Thought*, p. 146. [2] *Ibid.* p. 122.

infinite, whether referred to an impotence or to a power of the mind, is not of such a character that we can deduce from it any logical consequences available in philosophy or theology."[1] Nothing less than this is the legitimate result of the Hamiltonian philosophy, and here it is openly avowed by one of its most distinguished adherents. In the words which Berkeley has put into the mouth of the sceptical Lysicles, it may be said, that, according to this theory, "the very notion of God is taken away, and nothing left but the name, without any *meaning* annexed to it." The Deity is "an unknown subject of absolutely unknown attributes."[2] If we inquire what may be the result of such a theory as this, the answer may be found in the words of this same Lysicles,—"I could wish, indeed, the word God were quite omitted, because, in most minds, it is coupled with a sort of superstitious awe, the very root of all religion. I shall not, nevertheless, be much disturbed, though the name be retained, and the being of God allowed in any sense but in that of a mind, which knows all things, and beholds human actions, like some judge or magistrate, with infinite observation and intelligence."[3] I see not how such a sceptical spirit as this is to be discouraged, under a theory which confesses that the Pantheist and the Atheist are both invincible in their logic.

As I have maintained against Dr. Mansel that faith not only involves a declaration that a thing is, but also what the thing is, I also assert, in opposition to him, that the authoritative testimony of faith affords the ground-

[1] *Limits of Religious Thought*, p. 326.
[2] *Minute Philosopher*, Dial. IV. § 17.
[3] *Ibid.* § 16.

work from which we may safely reason concerning God. It is impossible for us to believe in the Divine Being without being able to tell in what we believe, or, in other words, what our meaning is when we speak of a Divine Being. And if this be possible, it is also possible to draw inferences, available in philosophy and theology, concerning the nature of God, in which the mind can rest with certainty. By this means we are able to affirm what is true concerning the Deity, and to deny what is false. It is easy to affirm, without the least hesitation, that the God in whom we believe is not the God of the Epicurean, or of the Pantheist, or of the Deist. It may be affirmed with perfect certainty that God is a spirit, one and indivisible, that He is a holy God, and that He is the preserver and ruler of all. Having laid down these propositions, it is easy to reason clearly and accurately against every opinion in philosophical speculation, or theological teaching, which is antagonistic to them. It must appear a marvellous thing that any one has been found to deny this, and more especially that he should be an earnest and reverent believer in revelation, and an upholder of its authority. But the defenders of the negative doctrine have found it impossible to avoid affirmation and denial, argument and inference, concerning the Deity. Sir W. Hamilton has asked us to "consider what kind of cause it is which constitutes a Deity." And though he is the upholder of the doctrine that the Infinite is for us nothing else than the negation of the conditions on which thought is possible, we find him reasoning about God's nature in the following clear and forcible manner: —"The notion of

God is not contained in the notion of a mere First Cause; neither is this notion completed by adding to a first cause the attribute of omnipotence; it is not until the two attributes of intelligence and virtue, or holiness, are brought in, that the belief in a primary and omnipotent cause becomes the belief in a veritable Divinity."[1] If we turn to the pages of Dr. Mansel, still more numerous declarations about the Divine nature are to be found.

It seems to me that there can be no doubt of the power which the mind possesses to reason accurately concerning the Infinite One. And if all our reasoning be strictly regulated by the authority of faith, there can be little hazard from its free, continued exercise. With the high testimony of faith to sustain us, we can descend to meet the Atheist, and the Pantheist, and the so-called Rationalist, on their own ground, and use our reason as freely, and perhaps much more effectively than they can do. And, still under the same high sanction, philosophy may carry forward the inquiry concerning the glorious perfections of the Deity, and theology may sketch out the course of systematic truth, provided always there be the wisdom to confess that neither philosophy nor theology can be regarded as a completed science, but only a body of ascertained truth, which is to be vastly enlarged by subsequent inquiry throughout the endless existence which has been allotted to man.

[1] *Metaphysical Lectures*, p. 26.

CHAPTER IV.

EXAMINATION OF SIR W. HAMILTON'S DISTINCTION OF THE INFINITE AND ABSOLUTE.

The entire course of investigation hitherto has involved exclusively the recognition of the One Infinite Being. The testimony of faith points to none other, and expressly involves the impossibility of more than one such Supreme Creator. He who is the One Infinite God is alone the Absolute. This might have been regarded as self-evident; and, without further delay, I might have advanced to contemplate the knowledge which the mind possesses of the great object of faith; but Sir W. Hamilton has interposed a special theory, which stands as a barrier to progress, and which must be encountered before going farther. He argues that if thought can transcend the relative, there are only two methods by which this is possible. But the reader will observe that this single assertion raises an entirely new element into the discussion, which seems to turn the current of inquiry away from its proper channel. The question presented is not whether thought can transcend the *finite*—that is to say, whether it be a possible thing for the human mind to contemplate an infinite object of thought; but whether thought can transcend the *relative*—that is to say, whether

we can reach, by the exercise of thought, an object free from relation to other objects, and entirely independent in being. Out of that, as very readily appears, springs the question whether thought itself be not a relation, and with this starts up an endless number of logical quibbles which henceforth gather around every point in the discussion, like a swarm of furious wasps round an enemy. He who would penetrate into the Philosophy of the Infinite must rid himself of these, else he will soon be paralysed, and smarting in every limb. The intellectual explorer of the tangled forest is suddenly assailed in this manner: Is thought not in itself a relation? is not every object of thought necessarily the relative? however much you increase the object, is it not still the relative? however much you diminish the object, is not the same still true? whatever faith declares, how can thought outstretch its own limits? Such is a specimen of the form of assault which is to be encountered. And if any inquirer, feeling somewhat bewildered by this mode of attack, were to ask what has the relativity of human thought, and the increase or diminution of finite objects, to do with the grand problem whether, in the exercise of thought, we can rise to contemplate the One Infinite God, I should think his question in every way sensible and pertinent. The Infinite Being does exist in relation, and it can be no contradiction of His nature that he should be recognised in relation.

But, before advancing to this stage of inquiry, it is necessary to ask how this form of objection has arisen; for in this way it is most likely that a satisfactory view of the opposition may be obtained. Even while protest-

ing against the introduction of this quibble concerning relativity, it is necessary to discover from what origin it is sprung.

The fundamental assertion of the Hamiltonian philosophy, in so far as it refers to the Infinite, is, that thought cannot rise above the relative. Behind this, though unexpressed, there is the unwarrantable assumption that the Infinite cannot exist in relation, or, as Hamilton would have preferred to express it, as appearing more formidable, the Infinite is not the Relative, which may either mean the same thing as the former statement, or quite a different thing. It may hereafter appear that the double meaning attachable to the latter form of the assertion is the only possible ground of dispute, and is the real origin of the host of logical quibbles to which reference has just been made. That thought cannot rise above the relative, I may readily admit, and yet maintain that thought does contemplate the Infinite. But, in the eyes of Sir W. Hamilton, the former simple statement finally established the impossibility of any knowledge of the Infinite. The process is short and direct. Thought cannot rise above the Relative: the Infinite is not the Relative; therefore thought cannot rise to the Infinite. This is the simple process by which the gates are at once closed against the human intellect in its inquiry concerning the One Infinite God. If any man is rash enough to attempt to advance, that syllogism is uttered in his hearing, and straightway he must turn and content himself with gazing on things finite, or he may sit down to indulge in hopeless grief, for that terrible impossibility must remain for ever.

The reader may thus see to what the philosophy of

Sir W. Hamilton is shutting us up, and if he have any doubt as to the issue, let him turn to Dr. Mansel's *Limits of Religious Thought* for the development of its results, and after reading again, and again, and again, he may wonder, as I have done, how there can be any such thing as religious thought at all, on such a theory. With this feeling, the reader will not think it unnecessary or dull work, if I seek to examine each step, from the turning-point onwards, along the short path, till we reach the gates so strongly barred. The course is essentially a logical one, and is no longer than a single syllogism. After having asserted that human thought cannot rise above the relative, Sir W. Hamilton proceeds with a logical experiment to illustrate the impossibility. He argues that if it be possible for thought to rise above the relative, it must be in one of two ways; either by discovering a *finite object*, which is out of relation as "perfect, complete, total," or, by reaching an *infinite object*. Having said thus much, our author immediately occupies himself with an experiment among logical wholes and parts, which seems very far away from the subject. He seeks to ascertain whether the mind can reach a *whole* so large, that, although it be *limited*, it cannot be the part of a larger whole; or a *part* so small, that it cannot itself be a whole made up of parts. All this, I must with deference say, is nothing more than an encumbrance of this very important philosophical inquiry. There is no reason, indeed, why such experiments should not be conducted by those who are curious enough to prosecute them, but they have no bearing whatever on the possibility or impossibility of a Philosophy of the Infinite. The logical

exercises involved can never lead to the Infinite, and the hypothetical object sought, an unconditioned whole and part, have not only no existence, but involve a contradiction in the attempted distinction between them and other logical wholes and parts. In this process, Sir W. Hamilton professes to investigate what thought can do, but at the same time he treats of certain objects for which he professes to search. It is impossible to consider what thought can reach, without considering the objects with which thought is engaged. Either the whole and part professedly sought are objects really existing, and affording an illustration of what the Absolute is, or the author was altogether astray in the experiment with which he has occupied so much of his discussion concerning the Unconditioned. What I maintain is, that these professed absolutes are in no sense absolute, if they were found; or, if you will, that these two forms of logical experiment can never lead to the Absolute, and that there is but one direction in which the mind can turn, that is along the path which Hamilton declares is barred at the very entrance. We may indeed attempt an experiment to test what thought can do by enlarging or diminishing the objects it has in possession, but this is not the method in which the great question involved is to be decided. The real starting-point of the discussion is the inquiry whether we recognise any object but the Finite; whether we believe in the existence of an Infinite God; and, if so, what conception we form of His nature. This is altogether a metaphysical, and not a logical inquiry.

If the course thus indicated is not the only one to be

pursued, Sir W. Hamilton comes in some mode to distinguish two different objects, named absolute, both of which are nevertheless declared unattainable by the mind. They are the mere products of a gratuitous definition, formed by a process altogether inadmissible, the combination of contradictory attributes, the absolute and the relative, and presented without any regard to the reality of being, or the facts to be found within the horizon of faith. Whether it be an absolute whole or an absolute part which is referred to, the thing is a contradiction. An absolute part there cannot be, and the Absolute cannot be made up of parts.

The course which Sir W. Hamilton has followed has led him to adopt a singular use of the terms, ordinarily employed to describe that which is above the finite. An examination of the manner in which he uses the descriptive terms, embracing a view of his logical experiments with wholes and parts, is the best method of determining the value of the opposition which he has raised to the declaration, that we do possess a knowledge of the Infinite.

In connexion with this subject there are three terms in common use—the Infinite, the Absolute, and the Unconditioned. These are usually regarded as synonymous. The Infinite is that which is absolute, that which is unconditioned, that is to say, limited or restricted by no conditions. But in the language of Sir William, the *Infinite* is the "unconditionally unlimited," the *Absolute* is the "unconditionally limited," and the *Unconditioned* is the genus of which the Infinite and Absolute are the species. According to this distinction, the Infinite is

that which is without beginning or termination,—which is circumscribed by no boundaries,—which is determined by no limits. The Absolute is that which, while limited, is finished, perfect, or complete in itself; and consequently is subject to no conditions. The two constitute, according to this theory, the opposite poles, between which alone all thought, as conditioned, is possible. If there be such a thing as unconditioned existence, it must be one or other of these, but to decide which, is beyond the power of human thought. Both are, therefore, to be logically included under one genus, unconditioned.

That which distinguishes them from each other is, that the Infinite is *unlimited*, the Absolute is *limited*. In contradistiction to this, others have usually regarded the Infinite and Absolute as one and the same, and have not recognised the possibility of any other Absolute than the Infinite. With all deference to Sir W. Hamilton, I consider that the problem of the Unconditioned is one, and not twofold as he has maintained; and, in confirmation of this opinion, I shall endeavour to show that the Infinite is also absolute, and that the Absolute as defined by him is not really absolute.

I. The Infinite is in its nature also absolute. Sir W. Hamilton makes the Infinite and Absolute not only essentially distinct, but even *contradictory opposites*, consequently, it seems from this doctrine that philosophers, in regarding the Infinite as at the same time Absolute, must have been attributing to it that which does not belong to it. The question to be answered, therefore, is,—Do philosophers in general include in the Infinite that which does not pertain to it; or, does the

author of this distinction exclude from it that which really belongs to it?

It is necessary first to define the term *Absolute*. The plain and etymological meaning of the term is *freed* or *loosed*, and hence it means freed from restriction or condition. In this sense it is evident that the Infinite must be absolute, for that which is not limited does not afford the possibility of restriction. This is the sense in which philosophers have uniformly used the word; and, in this sense, Sir William admits that "the Absolute is not opposed to the Infinite."[1] Thus far, then, there is no difference. If philosophers, therefore, are chargeable in the matter, it is not in respect of positive *error*, but in respect of *neglect*. But, is it warrantable in Sir William to take a term which naturally, and by common consent, expresses a certain notion, and apply it to that which is entirely distinct? If it be true, as our author admits, that, in the primary sense of the word absolute, the Infinite, from its very nature, is absolute, is it warrantable to take the word absolute and apply it to that which is asserted to be even contradictory of the Infinite? The question might be pushed farther,—If the Infinite be necessarily absolute, can that be really absolute which is contradictory of the Infinite? But this is to anticipate what shall be afterwards considered. The meaning of the term absolute, as employed by Sir William, will shortly appear; but what requires to be observed in the meantime, is that he admits that philosophers are correct in regarding the Infinite and Absolute as convertible, if the latter term be used as expressive of entire freedom

[1] *Discussions*, p. 13.

from all restriction. His objection is, not that philosophers have put their Absolute in the wrong place, but that they have failed to recognise an Absolute in another sense which he marks out.

The sense in which Sir William Hamilton employs the term absolute, when he distinguishes it as contradictory of the Infinite, is what is *finished, perfected, completed;* so that the Absolute in this sense is "what is out of relation, etc., as finished, perfect, complete, total."[1]

In reference to the application of the *word* absolute in this sense, it may be remarked, *first*, that even this definition of the Absolute, so far from excluding the Infinite, or being *contradictory* of it, in reality includes it. This is sufficiently plain, for it is obvious that the Infinite is perfect and complete. If anything be "perfect" or "complete," the Infinite must, for if it were imperfect or incomplete it would be no longer infinite. If anything be "total," the Infinite must, for if there were any want in its totality it would cease to exist. Even with this second definition, then, philosophers were right in including the Absolute with the Infinite, and considering them applicable to the same existence. Yet Sir William says that, "in this acceptation, the Absolute is diametrically opposed to, is contradictory of, the Infinite."

On this ground, I remark, *secondly*, that, since Sir William's Absolute is pronounced contradictory of the Infinite, and yet it is apparent that the definition of the Absolute in reality embraces the Infinite, there has not

[1] *Discussions*, p. 13.

been drawn a sufficiently clear *verbal* distinction. If the definition of the Absolute presented by our author, indicates that which is *contradictory* of the Infinite, it, at the same time, indicates what as really *belongs* to the Infinite, and, therefore, includes too much, that is, includes so much that it destroys the asserted contradiction. That which is presented as the specific difference of the Absolute, namely, perfection or completeness, belongs as much to the Infinite as to the Absolute, and, therefore, constitutes no specific difference. That *perfection*, and not *limitation*, is the specific difference between the Infinite and the Absolute as distinguished in this theory, is sufficiently plain. Limitation is the specific difference between the finite and the Infinite, and this quality belongs to the Absolute only as a finite object, and distinguishes it from the Infinite, not specially, but only as it distinguishes the whole crowd of finite objects. Perfection or completeness is thus the quality which belongs to the Absolute *as unconditioned;* it is presented as the specific difference between the Absolute and the Infinite; and inasmuch as this quality belongs to the Infinite, equally with the Absolute, there is no specific difference established, and the distinction breaks down. Of course, these remarks are based upon the admission that there is such a thing as this absolutely perfect or complete existence, apart from the Infinite and contradictory of it. This I admit only for the sake of criticism, and for the purpose of showing that the nomenclature employed in other systems of philosophy is, at least, more exact than that of the theory which distinguishes the Infinite and Absolute as contradictory opposites.

II. There is no such Absolute as that which Sir W. Hamilton postulates, and which he asserts to be contradictory of the Infinite. It is necessary here to recal Sir William's definitions of the Infinite and of the Absolute; the Infinite is the *unconditionally unlimited*, the Absolute is the *unconditionally limited*. Now, I cannot understand in what sense the Absolute can be called the *unconditionally limited*. How can anything be called *unconditioned*, which is at the same time *limited?* Is not limitation a condition of existence? May we not as well speak of the unlimitedly limited, or of the unconditionally conditioned, as of the unconditionally limited? If the Infinite is unconditioned, inasmuch as it is unlimited; must not the Absolute be conditioned, inasmuch as it is limited?

But, to be more particular, it may be well to look at the illustration of the Absolute which Sir William gives. He says:—"For example, on the one hand, we can positively conceive, neither an absolute whole, that is, a whole so great, that we cannot conceive it as a relative part of a still greater whole; nor an absolute part, that is, a part so small that we cannot also conceive it as a relative whole, divisible into smaller parts." Sir William says, that we cannot realize in thought the Absolute which he distinguishes, any more than we can the Infinite; but, if we could, there are two instances in which it might be reached: 1*st*, "A whole so great, that we cannot conceive it as a relative part of a still greater whole," that is, a whole *perfect* in itself, *complete*, and not standing *related* as a part to a greater whole; 2*d*, "A part so small, that we cannot also conceive it as a relative whole,

divisible into smaller parts," that is, a part *perfect* in itself, *complete*, and while a part, at the same time a whole, one and indivisible, and not standing *related* to any parts of which it should be the sum. These, if they could be conceived, would both present examples of what have been distinguished as the Absolute.

Let me direct attention to these in their order. The Absolute, in the sense in which Sir W. Hamilton employs that term, is exemplified in a whole so great, that it forms no part of some greater whole. Imagine a whole so small as to be confessedly conditioned, because related both to certain parts which it contains, and to a whole in which it is contained. Extend from this whole, to the greater in which it is contained; and again to that which is still greater; and, proceeding in this manner, I ask if the absolute whole, which is the object of search, can be reached? The answer to this question must be twofold.

In the *first* place, the Absolute never can be attained except by reaching the *Infinite*. Whatever the extent of the whole, with which, on account of the limited character of our mental powers, we have terminated, it must be related to another beyond, and this must be the case with every whole short of the Infinite. The only Absolute which can exist is that which is at once infinite and indivisible. And in speaking of such a Being, the term whole, if applied at all, must be used in a manner completely distinct from its logical significance. There cannot be anything more incongruous and irrelevant than the introduction of discussion concerning logical wholes and parts, into a metaphysical inquiry concerning

the existence or non-existence of a knowledge of the Infinite God.

Whatever be our differences of opinion on this subject, and they are sufficient in number without needless multiplication of them, there is no dispute about the fact that the mind does not rise to the recognition of the Infinite by such an ascending logical process. It is not in an ascending scale formed by the logical relation of whole and part, that an acknowledgment of the Divine existence is to be secured, or a knowledge of His nature attained. If Sir W. Hamilton meant to indicate this as only one of the possible ways of reaching the Absolute, let it be granted at once that it is an impossible way, and that here at least there can be no dispute between those who embrace the opposite theories on this important subject. Anything more contradictory of our own nature, or more inconsistent with God's glory, there could not be, than to suppose that by starting with the relative, we could by any effort of ours produce an Absolute.

In the *second* place, such a whole as that indicated by Sir W. Hamilton is not Absolute. If we begin with a limited whole, and extend from it to one still larger in which it is contained, and, advancing in this manner from less to greater, imagine such a whole as would accord with the Absolute as defined, viz., a whole which is perfect and complete in itself, because not related as a part to some greater whole,—have we obtained a whole which is really absolute? Assuredly not. Though such a whole were free from all relation as a part, it is *related* to the parts which it contains; and the combination of parts is thus a *necessary condition* of

its existence. If such a whole could exist, it would be unconditioned or absolute only on one side, by being free from relation to a superior whole; while it would be conditioned on the other side, by being related to certain component parts of which it would be the sum. But the Absolute is that which is entirely unconditioned; the whole indicated by Sir W. Hamilton is conditioned; therefore, it is not absolute.

Turn now to the other example of the distinction, and see if there be any better foundation for an Absolute, distinct from the Infinite, and opposed to it as contradictory. The example is, "an absolute part, that is, a part so small that we cannot also conceive it as a relative whole, divisible into smaller parts." If, then, we imagine the part of a limited whole, and thereafter take a part of this part, and thus proceed diminishing, could we ever in thought reach a part which would be absolute and final, by not being itself divisible into parts?

In the *first* place, the answer must be given in the same manner as in the previous instance, that we cannot; but in the present case the answer proceeds on different grounds. The absolute whole indicated above, never could be reached in thought, unless we reach the *Infinite;* the absolute part now indicated never can be reached, unless we can think of *nothing*, and, since to think of nothing is not to think at all, it never can be attained. We cannot think of an act of division resulting in nothing, therefore everything regarded as a part, is thought under the condition of divisibility. Division is a process of diminution, and if, in descending through this process, we were to reach the absolute part hypothetically indi

cated, it would be the smallest possible part—the point just next to nothing—any diminution of which would result in nothing. Suppose, then, that the least possible part is found. Though it cannot in thought be divided into two, is it not possible that there may still be a diminution of existence? Clearly there may. So long as there is existence, there may be diminution of it, until it is annihilated altogether. What is it, then, which hinders the mind from thinking of a part too small to be divided? In other words, what is it which renders it impossible for us to imagine a part so small that any diminution of its existence would result in annihilation? Simply the impossibility of conceiving or imagining annihilation—the impossibility of thinking of nothing. It is the necessity for having *something* as the result of each act of thought. It is nothing more nor less than the condition that all thought implies an object of thought. In the present instance, therefore, I do not say, as in the former case, that we cannot reach this Absolute unless we conceive the Infinite; because, were it possible to talk of an Infinite in the case, it would be an Infinite entirely different from that of which we speak in endeavouring to imagine an absolute whole. In attempting to rise to an absolute whole, the object of thought is always extending, that is, approximating towards an Infinite object, in the low and materialistic sense of infinite extension. But, in trying to descend to an absolute part, the object of thought is always lessening, that is, receding from an Infinite object. If then, in this relation, we can at all use the term Infinite, it must be in reference to the process of division. In the one case, it is an *Infinite object towards* which we

proceed; in the other, if such were possible, it would be an *Infinite process along* which we advance. In attempting, therefore, to reach an absolute part, the difficulty is not identical with that of reaching the Infinite.

Still farther, I deny that the impossibility of reaching an absolute part arises from the difficulty of carrying out an *Infinite process*. On the one hand, it is glaringly absurd to imagine that a *finite* part could afford ground for an *infinite* process of division;[1] on the other, the real difficulty exists at the very first stage of the division, as truly as at the fiftieth. The difficulty of reaching an absolute part, that is, a part which is one and indivisible, really consists in the impossibility of thinking of *nothing*. As the mind carries out a process of division, the result in each case must be, either a part which is again divisible, or a part so small that it cannot be again divided. As already shown, the former cannot always continue, and it is impossible to realize the other in thought, since any attempt at the division of such a part would result in annihilation, and since the mind cannot realize nothing as an object of thought, the only change of a part of which it can think, is division.

In the *second* place, the definition given of an absolute part, is not a definition of what is really absolute. An *absolute part* is a contradiction in terms, for a part is only the term of a *relation*. Such a part is obviously related to the whole of which it is a part, and, consequently, it is not absolute, but conditioned. Taking the two examples of the Absolute thus afforded, viz., an

[1] Hume has presented the common sense view of the matter. — *Treatise on Human Nature,* Book I. part ii. section 1.

absolute whole and an absolute part, it is obvious that they are conditioned, and that upon the converse sides, the absolute whole being necessarily related to the parts of which it is the sum, and the absolute part being related to the whole of which it is a part. In confuting the arguments of the French philosopher, the Scottish metaphysician has argued "that the Absolute, as defined by Cousin, is only a relative, and a conditioned;" by a similar course of reasoning, the argument may be turned with equal force against the Absolute indicated by Sir W. Hamilton, as contradictory of the Infinite. Here again, therefore, I conclude that philosophers are right in considering the Unconditioned as only a single existence, which is both Infinite and Absolute.

Once more, I remark that Sir W. Hamilton defines the Absolute, not only as what is perfect, complete, or whole, but also what is *finished*, *perfected*, *completed*, thereby indicating progression and the exercise of causal energy, which, at its termination, results in the production of the Absolute. Now, does not all this indicate something essentially *relative?* The Absolute, which is subject to no conditions, is thus made dependent for its existence upon a foregone relation. That which is *finished*, must have been previously *unfinished;* that which is *perfected*, must have been *imperfect;* that which is *completed*, must have been *incomplete*. That which is progressing, but is not finished; that which is in process towards perfection, but not perfected; that which is in course of completion, but is not completed,—is in its very nature relative and subject to conditions. The very definition of the Absolute, as given by our author, is fatal to his argument. This

Absolute is evolved out of the relative, and is thus a contradiction.

Having thus shown what is the Absolute as distinguished by Sir W. Hamilton, it is worthy of note that, in reference to this Absolute, he says it is "diametrically opposed to, is contradictory of, the Infinite." Now, in so far as this professed Absolute is *finite*, it is contradictory of the *Infinite*, but this it is in common with every other finite object. If it were absolute in the sense of being perfect and complete, and out of all relation, which it is not, it would not be contradictory of the Infinite, since the Infinite is also perfect and complete. But this absolute is not unconditioned, and the distinction between the Infinite and Absolute has not been established. Had the difference between those professed contradictories been presented fully in a verbal form, the fallacy would have been quite apparent. In such a form the Infinite would be the absolute-absolute, or the absolutely absolute, that is, the Absolute on both sides, the really Absolute; the Absolute as distinguished by Sir W. Hamilton, would be the *relatively absolute*, which is a contradiction in terms, and no absolute.[1]

III. Even if the Absolute, which Sir W. Hamilton distinguishes, be granted, it cannot be pronounced an extreme between which and the Infinite all positive thought lies. The author contrasts an absolute whole, with an infinite whole; and, on the other hand, an absolute part, with an infinite process. The latter must be put entirely out of account, since in that instance the Absolute is not contrasted with what is truly infinite.

[1] See Dr. Young's *Province of Reason*, p. 64.

The only real comparison attempted is that between the Infinite and an absolute whole. Passing the fact that the Infinite cannot be represented as a whole, and that the comparison is illegitimate, I would ask if it be true that all positive thought lies between these two extremes? Sir W. Hamilton describes thought as the conditionally limited; does that lie between the unconditionally unlimited, and the unconditionally limited? The terms of the question are a sufficient answer. So far from Sir W. Hamilton having presented an Absolute, which is an extreme opposed to the Infinite, he has attempted by abstracting a quality from the unconditioned, that is, completeness, and joining it to a quality of the conditioned, that is, limitation, thus to obtain a *connecting link* between the conditioned and the unconditioned. If, on the other hand, you turn from the object which is named the Absolute, to the process of thought by which an attempt is made to discover it, that process must be declared altogether inadequate for reaching the Absolute. Sir W. Hamilton had little warrant, from such a basis as this, to assault preceding philosophers. His distinction of the Absolute from the Infinite is altogether indefensible. There is nothing to warrant it among the facts of observation, no valid reasoning to vindicate it, and no authority in faith lending the least sanction to it. As an essential element in a propounded theory of thought, it fails, and the theory fails with it.

I have thus presented the grounds on which I agree with those who consider that there is only one existence to which we can apply the term unconditioned. The only unconditioned Being for whose existence we have the

warrant of a primary belief, is at once Infinite and Absolute, unlimited in His own nature, and unrestricted by any other being. In seeking to determine the possibility of a knowledge of the Infinite, Sir W. Hamilton has set out on a false method, and the entire logical discussion concerning wholes and parts does not involve the slightest contribution towards a solution of the question, but is altogether an encumbrance to our philosophical research.

The term Unconditioned has been employed by Sir W. Hamilton, and the term Absolute by Dr. Mansel, in a twofold signification, as denoting either the absence of all *restriction*, or, more widely, the absence of all *relation*. These two meanings have been used as convertible, and, without the least warning, have been transposed, involving the discussion in endless confusion. As if to gather increased difficulties around a subject in itself difficult enough, a fictitious definition has been used to conjure up innumerable contradictions in existence and thought, which it is affirmed the human mind cannot explain nor escape. Like a band of undying enemies they are continually made to confront the mind, looking fierce enough, and yet doing no execution. Dr. Mansel has done his utmost to marshal the host, and the result is an array of contradictions which would be very formidable, were it not that they have no place except in the author's theory. The refutation of the whole is found in the fact that the Absolute is made to imply the absence of all relation, whereas such an Absolute has no existence. God himself is not Absolute in this sense, and the designation can apply to no other being. The only legitimate meaning which can be attached to the terms Unconditioned and

Absolute, is freedom from all restriction. The Absolute is that which, though actually related, is free from all necessary relation, that is, free from relation as a condition of existence. It is certainly a possible thing for the Absolute to exist in relation, but the relation must be such as can be removed, without impairing its existence. If this be true, not the slightest sanction can be adduced for the use which Sir W. Hamilton and Dr. Mansel have made of the terms Unconditioned and Absolute.

Professor Fraser, commenting on the foregoing criticism, has spoken as if it were unnecessary. He says,— "We do not think these chapters,[1] however, the most satisfactory part of the book. Instead of recognising *two* unconditioned beings, the chief defect of Sir W. Hamilton's theory seems to be, that it hardly leaves room for the recognition of any."[2] My reply is, that we are looking at Hamilton's system from different points of view. In the above criticism, I have been considering what it is in starting; Professor Fraser has been contemplating what it is in its conclusion. There can be no doubt that he begins by indicating a twofold method by which the mind may reach the Unconditioned, and that this involves two definitions of the nature of the Unconditioned, and to these definitions, as well as the proposed logical method from which they have sprung, do my criticisms apply at the present stage of the investigation. I certainly agree in the opinion expressed concerning the Hamiltonian system,

[1] Referring to this and a succeeding Chapter on Negative Thinking.
[2] *Essays*, p. 218.

that it hardly leaves room for the recognition of one Unconditioned Being, nay, it most certainly leaves no room whatever for any such recognition; but I think Professor Fraser wrong, if, for that reason, he considers any argument against the twofold definition either needless, or groundless. Sir W. Hamilton positively affirms, that the Absolute which he distinguishes is "diametrically opposed to, is contradictory of the Infinite." When such an assertion is made, it is surely warrantable to inquire what this Absolute is, and how it is proved to be not only distinct from the Infinite, but contradictory of it. The object of the present chapter is to show that there is and can be no such Absolute.

I use the Infinite, the Absolute, and the Unconditioned as applicable only to the Deity. As referring to God, they are nearly synonymous, though each has its own peculiar shade of meaning. The *Infinite* expresses the absence of all limitation, and is applicable to the one Infinite Being in all His attributes. The *Absolute* expresses perfect independence both in being and in action, and is applicable to God as self-existent. The *Unconditioned* embraces both, and indicates entire freedom from every restriction, whether in its own nature, or in relation to other beings. I think it were well that the term Unconditioned were altogether abandoned, as there is no special need for its use, and it is very apt to mislead. There is a sense in which the term cannot be applied to God,—a sense in which it involves not only the absence of *necessary* relation, but of *all* relation. This wide signification of the word must be laid aside, and over all the reasoning based upon it, should be written

the title,—Abstract speculations, which apply to nothing. Dr. Young, in his vigorous work, entitled *The Province of Reason*, seems inclined to suggest that even the terms Infinite and Absolute have such a slight shade of difference, that we may be contented to speak only of the Infinite. But true as it is that the Infinite must be the Absolute, and that the Absolute must be the Infinite, the difference of their application is marked, and of very great value. The Infinite is the expression to be used when we seek to indicate that the Deity is unlimited in all His attributes; but the term Absolute is the one to be employed when we speak of God in relation to His creatures, and would seek to convey the truth, that while related to all, He is *necessarily* related to none, that is, dependent on none.

Dr. Mansel, after quoting the definitions of the Absolute and the Infinite which I have given above, adds the following criticism:—"The definitions may be accepted, though they lead to conclusions the very opposite of those which the ingenious author has attempted to establish. The Absolute, as above defined, is taken in the first of the two senses distinguished by Sir W. Hamilton,[1] and in this sense it is the necessary complement of the idea of the Infinite. The other sense in which the Absolute is contradictory of the Infinite is irrelevant to the present argument."[2] Dr. Mansel thus expresses no opinion concerning Sir W. Hamilton's Absolute, which I have endeavoured to show is not the Absolute; but it is gratifying to have the acknowledgment that the Absolute, in its ordinary signification, is "the necessary com-

[1] *Discussions*, p. 14. [2] *Limits of Religious Thought*, p. 300.

plement of the *idea* of the Infinite." I have no desire to lay too much force on mere phraseology, but it is at least worthy of notice that, notwithstanding the strong assertions of the impossibility of such a thing, Dr. Mansel has "an idea of the Infinite" to which he can appeal, and the Absolute is the necessary complement of it. When, however, the author says that my definitions "lead to results the very opposite of those" which I have attempted to establish, it is a pleasant thing for me, in replying to the unsustained assertion, to use the words of one who is his critic and mine, and who, after having quoted the above, says, "we should have liked to see some reason assigned for this sweeping statement, for assuredly it is far from self-evident."[1] It would certainly have been desirable that at least some reason for his assertion had been given. In the absence of this, perhaps those who have studied the controversy may not be surprised if I simply return the criticism, as I now do, and affirm that Dr. Mansel's definitions carry in them the overthrow of his own theory. The truth is, that we are agreed concerning the very important and fundamental point of definitions; those which I had given, are practically the same as those which Dr. Mansel has presented; and, this being the case, I can have no hesitation in admitting that they must overthrow the theory of one or other. As it is in connexion with his own definitions that he presents the criticism of mine, it may be well to quote his, and the reader will observe their similarity to what has been laid down above. "By the Absolute is meant that which exists in and by itself, *having no necessary relation to*

[1] *British and Foreign Evangelical Review*, No. 28, p. 437.

any other Being. By the Infinite is meant that which is free from all possible limitation; *that than which a greater is inconceivable;* and which consequently can receive no additional attribute or mode of existence, which it had not from all eternity."[1] I willingly accept these definitions, and I say that they contain the elements of my defence at many of the points on which I have been assailed, and the complete destruction of many of the contradictions which are said to spring from any attempt to know the Infinite and Absolute. While, however, they express the characteristics upon which we are agreed, it may be that they afford cover for assertions on which we may hereafter differ. It is oftentimes difficult within the dimensions of a definition to embrace everything, which the subsequent exigencies of discussion may show to be necessary, and I shall not say that these definitions completely shut out all possibility of "word-juggling." Sometimes definitions themselves need to be defined, because of the discovery that common statements, accepted sincerely and without the least reserve on both sides, have been differently understood in certain respects. Whether it will be so in the present instance, the result must show; and I am not without the fear, that while our definitions are almost identical, there is still some lurking difference. In reference to the meaning of the Absolute, I have no dispute with Dr. Mansel, nor do I think that the language employed to express it, admits of the least difference. There is also evident agreement between us concerning the meaning of the term Infinite; but I am not without

[1] *Limits of Religious Thought,* p. 45.

apprehension that some diversity may arise on the signification attached to the word "limitation." I had said that "the Infinite expresses the entire absence of *all limitation*;" Dr. Mansel says, "By the Infinite is meant that which is free from *all possible limitation*." The agreement seems complete; but, lest there should be any need for it, I subjoin a somewhat ample paraphrase, which may help to mark more sharply the outlines of the definition. When we say that the Infinite is the unlimited, we simply employ synonymous terms; in using them we speak of the nature of the self-existent Being, but these terms do not in the least explain what that nature is; they leave His real nature unexpressed, and they merely imply that whatever that nature is, or whatever it contains, it is unrestricted in measure; it has, and can have, no restriction within itself, and there can be no restriction of its nature from without. It may be that the need for throwing up this outwork around the definition of the Infinite is not at once apparent; but, if I mistake not, the necessity for it must shortly appear. It consists chiefly in this, that there are various possible applications of the term "infinite," which are completely inapplicable to the only Infinite Being. The very prevalent tendency in philosophical speculation on this subject, to argue as if "our idea of infinity arises from the contemplation of *quantity*, and the endless increase the mind is able to make in quantity, by the repeated additions of what portions thereof it pleases,"[1] has led to various uses of the term "infinite," which are not only inapplicable to the Divine Being, but even contradictory

[1] Locke's *Essay*, B. II. chap. xvii. sect. 7.

of His nature. Such, for example, are these,—"an infinite line,"—"an infinite surface,"—and "an infinite number." All such expressions have obviously been used from a tacit admission that "our idea of infinity arises from the contemplation of *quantity*." But, as I have said, the terms "infinite" and "unlimited," while they apply to the nature of God, do not explain what that nature is, and as soon as the nature of the Deity is indicated, all these expressions immediately disappear. Whenever it is declared that God is a *spirit*, it is affirmed that God is not extended, and that all references to quantity are inapplicable to Him. Locke's statement is immediately set aside, and, unless I greatly mistake, much that has been written on the subject of the Infinite since the days of Locke, falls to be expunged. Men have spoken and written as if God were an extended surface, and as if the existence of any other being must necessarily prove a limitation of His nature. So far has this materialistic notion of the Infinite One been carried, that it is impossible to speak of what is *within* God's nature, and what is *without* or beyond that nature, without the risk of being charged with contradiction. What is within the Divine nature is immediately dealt with, as though it were a circle in space; and what is without is regarded as existence also occupying space, and rendering the expanse of the Deity restricted and partial. It has thus become necessary to insist upon the fact that the term "infinite," when applied to God, does not reveal His nature, and when that nature is declared to be spiritual and not extended, the term Infinite is to be interpreted accordingly, and purified of everything which bears the least trace of materialism.

When, therefore, we speak of what is *within* the nature of God, we do not refer to what is within certain physical boundaries, but to all that *belongs to* the nature of the Deity, whereas what is *without* the Divine nature is that form and measure of existence which is *distinct from* God, and by which He cannot be restricted or limited.

Dr. Mansel has very frequently written in accordance with a materialistic notion of the Infinite, and he has no sooner presented his definitions of the Absolute and Infinite than he proceeds to violate them. I shall be careful not to content myself with bare assertion, but shall present illustrations of what I mean. The first words he has written after his definitions are these,— "The Infinite, as contemplated by this philosophy, cannot be regarded as consisting of a limited number of attributes, each unlimited in its kind."[1] To this I reply that the term "Infinite" does not express the nature of God, but simply the measure of that nature; it does not declare what the attributes of God are, and *how many* they are in number, but simply affirms that, whatever they be, they are unlimited in degree. Infinity is not in itself an existence, it is a characteristic of the nature of God, and of all His attributes.[2] I consider that philosophy wrong in its contemplation of the Infinite, which declares that it "cannot be regarded as consisting of a limited number of attributes, each unlimited in its kind." The number of attributes belonging to the Deity is not to be determined, either in one way or another, by a definition of the word "Infinite;" and no human philo-

[1] *Limits of Religious Thought*, p. 45.

[2] Dr. M'Cosh has hinted at this, *Intuitions of the Mind*, p. 227.

sophy can map out the Divine nature by any such process. Whatever the definition given of the Infinite, it is utterly unwarrantable on the ground of that, to make any assertion concerning the number of the Divine attributes, though it is manifest that, whatever these attributes be in number, or in nature, "each is unlimited in its kind." Our faith in the Divine existence is the only explanation of the use of the term Infinite; it is the only authority by which we are able to define its meaning; but we must turn to seek further testimony from the same authority, concerning the attributes of God, before any affirmation can be made regarding them. If this be carefully done, I think it must be admitted that our primary belief gives no declaration of the exact number of attributes belonging to the Divine nature. It testifies most decidedly to the reality of certain attributes, such as power, wisdom, and goodness, but it makes no declaration concerning the complete number. We are quite certain that the Infinite "is free from all possible limitation," that is to say, whatever belongs to the Infinite Being is infinite; but whether the perfections of the Infinite One are infinite in number, we have no means of deciding. We are sure that God is possessed of all perfections; but whether "all perfections" consist of a limited number, or are infinite in number, it is impossible for us to say; and even on the supposition that they are limited in number, it cannot be said that limitation in *number*, is any limitation in God's *nature*. If any one assert the contrary, he is dealing only with logical symbols, without regard to the testimony which faith gives concerning the one Infinite Being. God is

infinite in His nature, in so far as He is possessed of all perfections; and every attribute in His nature is infinite, in so far as it is unlimited in degree. In the former application, infinity may be called an attribute of God's nature; in the latter, an essential characteristic of every attribute in the Divine nature.

It is necessary to follow the remarks of Dr. Mansel somewhat farther. His next statement is intended to illustrate the assertion on which I have just been commenting, that the Infinite "cannot be regarded as consisting of a limited number of attributes." His words are these,—"It cannot be conceived, for example, after the analogy of a *line*, infinite in length, but not in breadth; or of a *surface*, infinite in two dimensions of space, but bounded in the third."[1] A line! A surface! The Infinite is neither of these, and it cannot be conceived as either. Here we are dragged down to illustrations essentially materialistic, and certain to lead astray if they receive the least regard. Not any one of the three "dimensions of space" is applicable to the Infinite, —neither length, breadth, nor thickness,—and the want of these is no possible limitation of the Infinite. There is, indeed, a tempting opportunity for "word-juggling," which may be kept up by a dexterous use of the single term "limitation;" but I content myself with the simple declaration that God, the only Infinite, is infinite because possessed of all perfections, and each perfection is infinite in itself. Let any one disprove that, if he can.

When, in the next clause, Dr. Mansel proceeds to speak of the Infinite as "an intelligent being," I have no

[1] *Limits of Religious Thought*, p. 45.

objection to offer to his statement, that "it cannot be conceived under the analogy of an intelligent being, possessing some one or more modes of consciousness in an infinite degree, but devoid of others," if it simply mean, that the Infinite One must be possessed of every perfection belonging to intelligence. When, however, he advances to the following statement, we are once more at variance. He says,—"The metaphysical representation of the Deity must necessarily, as the profoundest metaphysicians have acknowledged, amount to nothing less than the sum of all reality." Without professing to question the profundity of these metaphysicians, it may be doubted if the acknowledgment here mentioned can be regarded as one of the proofs of that quality of mind. With all admiration of the ability of the men, I may venture the statement, that it seems to me they are wrong in this particular; and I regret that in his letter to me, Sir W. Hamilton has accepted this definition, making the Infinite equivalent to *τὸ Ἓν καὶ Πᾶν*.[1] It will be observed that in the above statement Dr. Mansel speaks expressly of "the metaphysical representation of the *Deity*," and in applying the words to God, there can be no charge of giving to them a reference which they were never intended to bear. So deeply sensible am I of the wrong done to Religion and Philosophy, by the declared necessity of such a representation of the Deity, that I could have wished that some other interpretation of the words could have been found. But this seems impossible. It is the Deity of whom the author speaks; and if you inquire why the Deity must be

[1] *Lectures on Metaphysics*, II. p. 531.

represented as "the sum of all reality," the answer is, because He is Infinite, and this He must be conceived to be, in order "to conceive the Deity *as He is.*" "The metaphysical representation of the Deity must necessarily amount to nothing less than the sum of all reality!" It must amount to the changeable and the unchangeable, the material and the spiritual, the finite and the infinite, the evil and the good, all in one! I can scarcely venture on the use of the name of the Deity, in criticising such an assertion as this; and yet I must ask, Is this metaphysically true? Is this the necessary representation of "the Deity as He is?" Is this the product of Dr. Mansel's definition, that the Infinite, instead of being one and indivisible, is a conglomerate of all things? If so, the similarity between our definitions covers extreme diversity of opinion. I consider that the Infinite is distinct from all that is finite, and that the want of the changeable, the material, the finite, and the evil, is "no possible limitation of the Deity." I am well aware that there are those who will argue that the want of limitation is a limitation of the Deity, and it will be said that if any actual mode can be denied of the Infinite, it is related to that mode and limited by it.[1] I know that it can be affirmed that the want of anything is a limitation, even though that want be the absence of all imperfection, and therefore I suppose the "word-juggling" with logical symbols must still go on, though the symbols apply to nothing. With all the respect I have for Dr. Mansel, because of his reverence for things sacred, and all the admiration I have of his great powers, it does seem to

[1] *Limits of Religious Thought*, p. 46.

me that a love of logical subtlety has in this case obscured his eyes to the recognition of metaphysical truth. It is useless to reason with any one who affirms, that the Infinite must be limited unless it be also finite; that is to say, unless it contain in its nature contradictory characteristics. I am contented that both doctrines go forth to be subjected to the tests of criticism, and the result will declare which opinion is in accordance with the common sense of mankind.

The next application which Dr. Mansel makes of his definition, is to quote with approbation the question of Hegel, "What kind of an absolute being is that which does not contain in itself all that is actual, even *evil* included?" As I have already commented on this coincidence with Hegel, I shall not dwell upon it here. But there is evidence enough of the need for Dr. Mansel defining his definition, for the purpose of explaining the meaning of "freedom from all possible limitation." My understanding of the meaning is plain enough when I say, that it implies the possession of all perfections, freedom from limitation in any of His attributes, and freedom from restriction by other existences. Having said thus much, the usual play with symbols must be continued. The want of any mode of being is limitation; if the Infinite be not evil, it is limited! I imagine that few of those who study the Philosophy of the Infinite, can look for an answer to such "unassailable reasoning."

The last of the deductions which Dr. Mansel draws from his definitions, to which I shall allude, is this, "A cause cannot, as such, be absolute; the Absolute cannot, as such, be a cause." Stated formally, this argument

stands as follows:—A cause is related to its effect; the Absolute is that "which exists in and by itself, having no necessary relation to any other being;" therefore the Absolute cannot be a cause. The argument has only to be stated in order to expose its insufficiency. Dr. Mansel can find no warrant for it, from his own definition of the Absolute. If the Absolute be that "which exists in and by itself," it does not follow that other beings may not derive their existence from the Absolute: if the Absolute be that which has "no necessary relation to any other being," it may exist in a relation which is not necessary, that is to say, may exist as a cause, provided the relation be not a necessary condition of existence. The "apparent contradiction" has no existence, and does not need the introduction of succession in time in order to escape from it. I am willing to accept without question Dr. Mansel's definitions, both of First Cause and of the Absolute. They are these,—"By the *First Cause* is meant that which produces all things, and is itself produced of none. By the *Absolute* is meant that which exists in and by itself, having no necessary relation to any other Being." Instead of seeing in these any "apparent contradiction," they appear to me to harmonize most completely. They show that the First Cause is the Absolute, and that the Absolute is the First Cause. "The Divine nature is identical with the *most perfect nature*, and is also identical with the *first cause*."[1]

It is one of the most common, and, at the same time, one of the most deceptive statements, made by those who deny the possibility of any knowledge of the Infinite, that

[1] *Discussions*, p. 36.

the Relative is contradictory of the Absolute. The assertion bears all the appearance of an accredited maxim in philosophy, and is applied in such a manner as apparently to involve the affirmation that the Absolute cannot exist in relation,—a doctrine which is most certainly false. And yet it is repeated as if it were an axiom. If it be said that the Deity gave being to a finite creation, the reply is, that the Relative is contradictory of the Absolute; if it be said that God continues to be the Ruler of the universe He has made, the answer is the same; if it be said that He continues to be the preserver of His creatures, the answer is repeated. Nevertheless, the Absolute One is the Creator, and the Ruler, and the Preserver of the world, and in these respects does exist in relation. That definition of the Absolute is pitched too high, which does not embrace an acknowledgment of these facts, and all reasoning based on such a definition is irrelevant and false. When we speak of God and His creatures as distinct from each other, and yet related to each other, it is irrelevant to insist that the plural is the Relative, and contradictory of the Absolute. "The Relative," is the abstract term employed to embrace everything dependent on a certain relation for its existence; it is, therefore, another designation for the finite, since all finite existence is dependent on the Infinite. When, however, the Infinite and Absolute One exists in a relation, He does not thereby assume a nature which can be embraced under "the Relative." He is related, but not the Relative. He is not dependent for His being, or any measure of His glory, on that relation. It does not add to His glory, it does not abstract from it,—it does not in the least affect it. To

say, that distinction from any mode of existence is relation to it, and that relation to it is limitation of it, and therefore inconsistent with the nature of the Absolute, all of which Dr. Mansel says, is nothing more than stringing together logical forms without any logical sequence. And to quote from Spinoza, as Dr. Mansel has done, is "not to improve the matter, but only make it worse."[1] Whether Spinoza has been successful in his exposition of what constitutes the finite, need not engage attention at present; but his definition, with its reference to extended body and the limited operations of the human mind, has no bearing whatever on the nature of the Absolute, whether in relation, or out of it. It is very true, as Spinoza points out, that material bodies in proximity to each other, are seen to be limited; and, that the rise of one cognition after another, proves the limitation of both; but what is the value of such illustrations to Dr. Mansel in attempting to illustrate what is involved in the relation of the Absolute to finite existence? If these simple facts be observed, that the relation of material objects reveals their boundaries, and the succession of thoughts their termination in consciousness, what do they prove concerning the Absolute? Is it from such facts as these that Dr. Mansel would teach men how to discover what must be true concerning the Absolute? Is Spinoza's definition of the finite the foundation of that structure of assertions, which Dr. Mansel has reared concerning the Absolute? Is it upon such authority as this that men are to accept the sweeping assertion, that, "if any actual mode of being can be denied of the Absolute, it is related

[1] *Limits of Religious Thought*, pp. 46, 304.

to that mode, and *limited* by it"? Anything more illogical in reasoning, anything more certainly false as a matter of fact, anything more fitted to cast philosophical investigation on this subject into confusion, cannot be conceived. For it must be self-evident, that the relation between the Absolute and the finite, if such there be, must be entirely different from the relation of finite objects; and further, that the relation of the finite to the Absolute, must be quite different from the relation of the Absolute to the finite. In all such attempts to argue, that to be related is to be limited, in the case of the Absolute, as well as of the finite, there is a constant forgetfulness of the fact, that "the Divine nature is identical with the most perfect nature," and that relation can be no limitation, no mark of imperfection, in the case of the Absolute.

Hear how Sir W. Hamilton vindicates the singular course in which Dr. Mansel has been tempted to follow him! He addresses to me a question, and points out the alternatives which may be adopted. "Does not the Infinite *contain* the finite? If it does, then it contains what has parts, and is divisible; if it does not, then is it exclusive: the finite is out of the infinite; and the infinite is conditioned, limited, restricted—*finite*."[1] So manifest did it appear to Sir W. Hamilton that to exist in relation is to be limited, that he was ready to maintain, that the Infinite must cease to be infinite in order to exist in relation. And if you ask, How then did he reconcile his opinion with his own existence and that of finite creatures generally? hear his own words,—The In-

[1] *Lectures on Metaphysics*, II. p. 532.

finite is "an entity, which not excluding, in fact includes, the worlds of mind and matter." Sir W. Hamilton has charged me with misunderstanding the sense in which he spoke of the Infinite, but I certainly never thought of attributing to him any such use of the term as this. If he ask me the question—"Does not the Infinite contain the finite?"—I need not hesitate to answer, and shall not think it a hard thing to escape both of the alternatives he has presented. Nothing but the use of a logical, instead of a psychological method, could have made these two alternatives appear to afford the only possible answers, and even the logical process must have a materialistic basis in order to bring out any such result. The Infinite does not contain the finite; the finite is essentially distinct from the Infinite, and yet the Infinite is not "conditioned, limited, restricted," by the relative existence dependent upon it. I deny the doctrine which Sir W. Hamilton seems to favour, that the Infinite contains the finite, and therefore I escape the absurd alternative that the Infinite contains what has parts and is divisible. On the other hand, I deny that there is any logical sequence between the proposition that "the finite is out of the Infinite," and the attempted inference that "the Infinite is conditioned, limited, restricted,—finite." If the Infinite is an extended surface, the logical sequence is unquestionable; and if such unworthy views are maintained concerning the Infinite One, such philosophy may pass current in the world. But, before such logic is accepted, it is necessary that those who use it show the authority on which they maintain that the Infinite is extended. I am not aware that a shadow of authority

exists; and if not, whatever the Infinite be, the mere existence of other beings can be no "condition, limitation, or restriction" of the Infinite. The expression, "out of," as employed by Sir W. Hamilton, has a materialistic application, and certainly one material object existing "out of" another is a proof that both are limited. But if the expression "out of" be taken as equivalent to "distinct from," then I say that the existence of objects distinct from the Infinite can be no "limitation, condition, or restriction" of the Infinite. Existence in subordination to the Infinite can be no limitation of His nature; the only possible limitation is that which may arise from superiority to the Infinite, which is an impossibility. The only possible limitation of infinite power, must come from greater power; the only possible limitation of infinite wisdom, must come from superior wisdom; the only possible limitation of the all-perfect nature, is a more perfect nature; than which hypothetical propositions no greater absurdities could be named. The existence of subordinate beings, possessed of limited power, wisdom, goodness, and holiness, cannot by any form of logic be shown to be a restriction of the Infinite One.

There is a sense of relief in passing away from the cold logic, dealing with dry, dead forms, which finds its exercise in raising difficulties that have no application to the grand subject engaging attention. It is refreshing to turn to the simple, broad testimony of our faith, assuring us of the existence of the All-perfect One, at once the Infinite and the Absolute. He may scatter worlds from His hand with the greatest freedom, and

gather together His works of creation in the greatest profusion, and all shall still be dependent on His Will, and subordinate to Him during their entire existence. The excellencies of His glorious nature may be to us unsearchable, but it is the satisfaction of our intellect to contemplate the fact, of which our faith assures us, that all finite existence is no restriction to His greatness. The being of His creatures can no more subject Him to condition, than the falling of a shadow can stay the world in its course. This at least is beyond the assaults of all human logic, and plain enough to every intelligence who chooses to exert His gifts, that in all the works of His hand God has spread out before us the unmistakable evidence of their complete subordination to Himself.

CHAPTER V.

THE CHARACTERISTICS OF KNOWLEDGE AND THOUGHT AS BEARING ON THIS SUBJECT.

The whole strength of those who deny the possibility of the Infinite becoming an object of knowledge or of thought, is expended upon the attempt to show that the essential conditions of both are such as to make a knowledge of the Infinite, or thought concerning the Infinite, equally an intellectual impossibility. It is necessary, therefore, to enter somewhat carefully upon a consideration of the conditions and characteristics of knowledge and thought, in order to lay open to view the basis on which all reasoning on this matter must rest. This is the only method which can be pursued for a satisfactory solution of the question; and there is this obvious advantage in following the method closely, that it narrows the line of investigation to a point at each stage of advancement, and gives to those who differ a clear view of the exact points of diversity, so that there may be a fair and open debate upon them. There is indeed a summary logical method, which seeks, by presenting a single syllogism, to block up the way of inquiry entirely:—"To think is to condition; the Infinite is the Unconditioned; therefore, the Infinite cannot be thought." This was the chosen barrier behind which Sir W. Hamilton entrenched

himself, when attempting to turn back every effort to prove the possibility of a knowledge of the Infinite. But inquiry is not to be checked by any such summary process. Men will ask what is meant by those two authoritative declarations—that to think is to condition, and that the Infinite is the Unconditioned. The latter proposition I have already considered, and I now proceed to inquire what are the conditions of knowledge and thought—an inquiry which all must admit, as Dr. Mansel has done, is clearly open to us, as a province of investigation. It is essential to consider what knowledge is, and what thought is, as distinguished from knowledge, in order to decide whether the Infinite Being can be the object of knowledge, or of thought.

I. *Knowledge is the recognition of objects as existing.*[1] As distinguished from what is denominated *thought*, it is the perception of an object, or simple apprehension of a truth. "By knowledge is understood the mere possession of truths."[2] On this matter there is no diversity of opinion, and nothing to hinder immediate consideration of what is involved in the act of knowledge; in other words, what are its characteristics and conditions.

1*st*, *Knowledge implies the conscious relation of the mind with an object.* If the mind be conscious, it must be conscious of something. This is the very simple and obvious feature of our knowledge, which has been denominated *the condition of relativity*, of which not a little use has been made in vindication of the doctrine, that a knowledge of the Infinite is impossible. It has afforded

[1] Knowledge, as being a simple exercise of mind, does not admit of logical definition. It will, therefore, be understood that I am here engaged with exposition, not with definition.

[2] *Lectures on Metaphysics*, I. p. 8.

the occasion for casting down before us the chosen logical barrier in another form;—All knowledge is relative; the Infinite (or, the Absolute) cannot exist in relation; therefore, the Infinite cannot be known. So irresistible did this syllogism appear, that it forced the speculation of Germany into the absurd theory which maintains that we reach a knowledge of the Absolute by rising into unity of consciousness with the Deity. Sir W. Hamilton and Dr. Mansel agree in affirming, that the condition of relativity insures the overthrow of every theory, which declares a knowledge of the Infinite a possible thing. And here it will be observed, that their argument is not met by any attempt to favour the German hypothesis of a knowledge which is not relative. Notwithstanding all that Sir W. Hamilton has made of my admission that knowledge is relative,[1] I abide by the admission as manifestly declaring the fact; but the difference between the upholders of the opposite theories does not concern this fact, that all knowledge is relative. It must apply to the minor premiss of the syllogism, which asserts that the Infinite cannot exist in relation,[2]—an assertion which is emphatically denied on grounds already indicated. The Infinite does exist in relation, and it can be no valid argument against the possibility of a knowledge of the Infinite, that all knowledge implies relation. This is the final answer, and presents the simple point on which those interested in this discussion have to decide, in determining which view they will accept. At the same time, if the whole matter of difference concerns the question whether the Infinite can exist in relation, it

[1] *Lectures on Metaphysics*, II. p. 532. [2] *Ibid.*

seems impossible for any one to deny that the Infinite does exist in relation. Upon this matter of fact it is impossible to differ, and it seems inevitably to follow, that the whole dispute is nothing better than a strife of words, originated by a definition of the Infinite which has no application to any object. If this be enough to settle the dispute, I willingly admit that there can be no knowledge of an object which cannot exist in relation. But perhaps the matter is not improved, when I add that there is no such object, and assuredly the Infinite Being is not such in His nature as to make existence in relation an impossibility. I have already said all that is necessary concerning the true definition of the Infinite, and the authority on which the definition rests; and what is required here is, a closer consideration of the fact, that all knowledge implies the conscious relation of the mind with an object. The fact admits of being contemplated from both sides, as it concerns the mind exercising the power of knowledge, and as it concerns the object known.

(*a.*) *Relativity as it concerns the mind.* All that is involved in the condition of relativity as applying to the knowing subject is, that in order to exercise the power of knowledge, it must have something to be exercised upon: in order to know, there must be an object to be known. So far as yet appears, therefore, there is nothing to prevent the Infinite God from being an object of knowledge, if the fact of His existence come within the sphere of human apprehension, as I maintain it does by the very necessities of our being.

(*b.*) *Relativity as it concerns the object known.*

While it determines that the object known is for the time being consciously related to the mind, the condition of relativity exercises no influence whatever upon the object, inasmuch as the condition is purely mental. Whether an object is known or not known to a particular mind, makes no difference to the object, which has an external existence. If the object known be itself a mental phenomenon, the knowledge of it is dependent on its existence in the mind, instead of its existence being dependent on the knowledge. The nature of the phenomenon, as thought, feeling, or appetency, is not in any way determined by the fact that it must be known as a phenomenon, in order to exist as such. The measure of the phenomenon, as, for example, the extent of the thought, or the depth of the feeling, is not in any way regulated by the fact, that the mind must be conscious of its existence. It is true, as will shortly appear, that the measure of the phenomenon is determined by the power of the mind itself, but it is not regulated by the condition which requires that it be consciously present in the mind, in order to exist as an object of knowledge. I am specially concerned here with objects which exist apart from the mind, and the point upon which it seems necessary to insist is, that the condition of knowledge which has been denominated relativity, does not exercise the slightest influence upon the external object of knowledge. It makes no difference whatever to the stone, or the tree, or the horse, or the river, whether they are observed by some passer by, or unnoticed by any one. The object is the same in existence, whether it be an object of knowledge or not. So far as this condition of knowledge is concerned,

therefore, there is nothing to render a knowledge of the Infinite impossible, nothing to exercise the least influence on the Infinite Being, nothing in the requirements of our knowledge to infringe upon His attributes as the Infinite One. If He become the object of knowledge, He is related to our mind, or, more accurately, our mind is brought into relation with Him ; but such relation, so far from being inconsistent with His Infinity, does not affect it in the least. Of course, if the Infinite involve the negation of all relation, there can be no relativity whatever. This is an unassailable position. It has this misfortune, however, for all who choose to occupy it, that it tells with equal force against the existence of the mind, as against the exercise of its knowledge ; and equally against the existence of the universe, as against the existence of the mind.

In connexion with the bearing of the relativity of knowledge on the object, there is a singular tendency on the part of some, to write as though the object were involved in some contradictory or disastrous position, so soon as it ceases to be recognised by the mind. Take such a passage as this,—"The perceiving subject alone, and the perceived object alone, are two *unmeaning* elements, which first acquire a significance in and by their conjunction."[1] It seems equally impossible to discover what authority there can be for such a statement as this, and of what service it could be, if there were authority for making it. If it mean nothing more than, that an act of knowledge is possible only by the relation of the subject knowing and an object known, it is of no use : in

[1] *Limits of Religious Thought*, p. 143.

so far as it affirms more than this, it has no sanction. External objects are something more than "elements" of knowledge, since they have a separate existence, and distinct ends to serve, apart from our recognition of them. There is in the sentence just quoted, an unnecessary play upon the distinction between the same being, considered as an object of thought, and as a separate existence. Whether it be an object recognised by the mind, or maintaining an existence unrecognised, it is a being complete in itself, and to call it "unmeaning," either before it is known, or after it ceases to be an object of knowledge, is unwarrantable. To adopt a mode of criticism in favour with our author, it might be argued, that he who declares an existence "*unmeaning*," when *unknown*, must do so, either because he *knows* it to be unmeaning, or without any such knowledge. But he cannot know it to be unmeaning, for, *ex hypothesi*, when known it is not unmeaning; and he has no authority to declare it unmeaning, when he does not know that it is so.

2*d*, *Knowledge implies the recognition of an object by its qualities.* It is the recognition of an object by what it is, that is to say, the observation of the qualities which it possesses. In immediate connexion with the act of perception, there may be an act of comparison, distinguishing the object known from other objects, but of this I do not now speak. The act of knowledge is the simple perception of an existence, which is accomplished in the recognition of the qualities belonging to it; or the simple apprehension of a truth, whether it arise from the native possessions of the mind, be discovered by personal research, or be enunciated by another. In this view,

knowledge has again a twofold distinction, according as it is immediate or mediate.

(*a.*) *Immediate knowledge is the recognition of qualities in themselves.* If I perceive a stone lying before me, and in that act observe its shape, colour, thickness, and hardness, this is immediate knowledge. All knowledge which is obtained by contemplating the object in itself is direct or immediate. When a man looks upon external realities with the eye, when he is conscious of the existence of a certain phenomenon in the mind, when he discovers a truth by personal observation, or when the first principles of knowledge rise into consciousness from within the mind, in all those cases there is immediate knowledge. Unless the Infinite One, either from the necessities of His nature, or by the exercise of His free will, be entirely shut out from all direct contact or communion with the human mind, which few will maintain, there is nothing to prevent the Deity from being the object of immediate knowledge.

(*b.*) *Mediate knowledge is the recognition of qualities by their effects*, or through some medium by which a knowledge of them may be conveyed. In so far as the qualities of being are capable of producing a certain impression upon other forms of existence, they are capable of being recognised by the results which they produce, and this is mediate knowledge. If any one see a distinct mark on the damp sand of the sea-shore, he thereby obtains a mediate knowledge of the size and form of that which caused it, so that he may be able at once to declare that the mark was made by the foot of a man, or a quadruped, or a bird. All knowledge acquired in this way,

not directly, but through a medium, is mediate knowledge. Unless the Infinite Being have not brought any of the attributes of His nature into exercise within the sphere of our observation, there is nothing to prevent us having a mediate knowledge of His attributes. Whether He be not in possession of attributes which He has not exercised in such a manner as to place their effects within our observation, it is impossible for us to determine. It is, however, to be observed, that it is only in a secondary or subordinate sense, that what has been called *mediate* knowledge, is to be regarded as knowledge at all. In all *mediate* knowledge, there is an *immediate* element; that is, the recognition of the effects, or observed facts. And these effects only give us a mediate knowledge of their cause, because we already possess a knowledge of the kind of cause capable of producing such results. All mediate knowledge, then, presupposes an antecedent and immediate knowledge of the object. What may be called a mediate knowledge of the Deity is thus the recognised illustration in His works, of the operation of attributes originally revealed in the mind.

Having given this brief statement of the distinction between immediate and mediate knowledge, it is enough for the present to declare that I hold that we attain to a knowledge of the Infinite Being, in both of these forms. If I am right in maintaining that we have an *à priori* cognition of the Divine existence, *that* is an immediate knowledge. In so far as the attributes of God are shown forth in the works of creation, we have through these a mediate knowledge of the Deity.

3*d*, *Knowledge implies a measure of recognition pro-*

portionate to our powers of knowing. Man cannot by his greatest efforts stretch beyond the power which he possesses. The objects of knowledge may be such in their nature as to be easily recognised, or they may be quite the reverse, and in the latter case the knowledge must be proportionate to man's power to know. There are multitudes who never rouse themselves to any strenuous effort, to reach a knowledge of what is difficult and perplexing, and consequently they never know the full measure of the power they have. But the utmost any man can do is to reach the full exercise of his powers, and thereby attain such a knowledge as they are capable of acquiring. This manifest condition of human knowledge brings out some important considerations, full of interest in reference to the possibility of a knowledge of the Infinite Being.

(*a.*) *All our knowledge is finite.* This is self-evident, and in announcing it, it is clear that a vital point in the discussion is here reached, for the claims of the opposing theories must be decided by the answers to the question: Can there be a finite knowledge of the Infinite? Sir W. Hamilton and Dr. Mansel both answer emphatically in the negative; I, as decidedly, in the affirmative. In vindicating the opinion which I hold, I will consider Sir W. Hamilton's criticism of what I have written on the matter. In quoting from it, I will present only that which refers to *knowledge*, omitting meanwhile the reference to "thought and conception." He says, "You maintain that knowledge is and must be finite, whilst the object of knowledge may be Infinite. This appears to me to be erroneous, and even contradictory. An ex-

istence can only be an object of knowledge, inasmuch as it is an object known." And then, after an explanation of partial knowledge, to which reference shall be made shortly, he adds, "Nothing can be more self-repugnant than the assertion, that we have a finite knowledge of an infinite object of knowledge."[1] This seems to me a form of criticism springing much more obviously from a logical use of the words "finite" and "infinite," as correlative and contradictory terms, than from an analysis of the facts characteristic of human knowledge. If closely examined, it will be seen that this doctrine involves two distinct assertions, which I maintain to be false interpretations of the facts of our consciousness. It implies, *first, that all knowledge must be complete knowledge.* It is affirmed that there cannot be a finite knowledge of the Infinite, simply because the finite cannot *embrace* the Infinite; in other words, knowledge must be co-ordinate with the object, else there can be no knowledge at all. The authority for this declaration is the following: "An existence can only be an object of knowledge, inasmuch as it is an *object known.*" This is manifestly ambiguous, and may receive the assent of those who give to it a different interpretation. It may mean, either that "an existence can be an object of knowledge, only inasmuch as it is an object (*fully*) known," which is the only sense that can be of service in Sir W. Hamilton's criticism, and which I deny; or, it may mean that "an existence can only be an object of knowledge, inasmuch as it is an object (*in some measure*) known," which I readily admit, but which can be of no service in Sir W. Hamilton's criticism. Let

[1] *Metaphysical Lectures*, II. p. 531.

it be said that an object of knowledge must in every instance be an object completely known, and I suppose every one will deny it ; but, let it be said, on the other hand, that an object of knowledge must be an existence of which the mind knows something, and I suppose every one will admit it. There is still nothing here to shut us out from a knowledge of the Infinite. But Hamilton's doctrine implies, *secondly, that finite knowledge is identical with the knowledge of a finite object.* This I deny, on the basis of what I have already indicated concerning knowledge, viz., that it does not affect the object in respect of any of its qualities. When I say that I have a *finite knowledge*, the limit is clearly in my *knowledge*, and there must be some evidence palpable to my mind, that there is *also* a limit in the object, before it is possible for me to believe that there is. So far from these two being identical,—that I have a finite knowledge of an object, and that I have a knowledge of a finite object, they really involve two quite distinct elements of knowledge, *first*, that I am conscious that my knowledge is limited ; and *secondly*, that I know that the object is limited. A person who looks along a telegraphic wire, stretching away from him in opposite directions, sees it so far quite clearly, and thereafter he sees it dimly in the distance, until he loses sight of it entirely. His knowledge is limited, but, so far as he *knows*, the object is not limited at the farthest point of vision ; if it be, he must advance a certain distance in both directions before he can know that the wire actually terminates, so different is a consciousness of the limits of our knowledge, from a knowledge of the limits of the object. A traveller going

over certain portions of the earth's surface, has his direct personal knowledge continually limited by the line of his journey, and the various points at which he turns, but nothing could be more ridiculous than for such a traveller to maintain that the world is limited by his knowledge. Since, therefore, the limits of our knowledge are not identical with a knowledge of limits in the object, I maintain that, thus far, the conditions of knowledge leave it a possible thing to know the Infinite. In so far as the condition of *limitation* is concerned, it makes no practical difference in regard to the possibility of knowledge, whether the object stretching away beyond the measure of our knowledge be limited or unlimited, except that, in the one case, our knowledge may at length reach limits in the object; in the other, it never can.

In accordance with these views, there was, in the first edition of this work, a passage which Dr. Mansel has criticised, and which I insert at this point, for the purpose of presenting a reply. It was to the following effect:—No more do I believe that the mind, as finite, can only recognise finite objects, than I believe that the eye, because limited in its power, can only perceive those objects whose entire extension comes within the range of vision. As well tell us that because a mountain is too large for the eye of a mole, therefore the mole can recognise no mountain: as well tell us that because the world is too large for the eye of a man, therefore man can perceive no world, as tell us, that because the Infinite cannot be embraced by the finite mind, therefore the mind can recognise no Infinite. Before quoting the above passage, Dr. Mansel introduces an extract

from Cudworth's Intellectual System, which I shall also insert, as placing the matter completely before the reader. "Though we cannot fully comprehend the Deity, nor exhaust the Infiniteness of His perfection, yet may we have an idea or conception of a Being absolutely perfect; such a one as is *nostro modulo conformis*, 'agreeable and proportionate to our measure and scantling,' as we may approach near to a mountain, and touch it with our hands, though we cannot encompass it all round, and enclasp it within our arms. Whatsoever is in its own nature absolutely inconceivable is nothing; but not whatsoever is not fully comprehensible by our imperfect understandings."[1] Dr. Mansel's criticism is the following:—"The illustrations employed by both authors are unfortunate. The part of the mountain touched by the hand of the man, or seen by the eye of the mole, is, *ex hypothesi*, as a part of a larger object, imperfect, relative, and finite. And the world, which is confessedly too large for the eye of a man, must, in its unseen portion, be apprehended not by sight, but by some other faculty. If, therefore, the Infinite is too large for the mind of man, it can only be recognised by some other mind, or by some faculty in man which is not mind. But no such faculty is or can be assumed. In admitting that we do not recognise the Infinite in its *entire extension*, it is admitted that we do not recognise it *as infinite*."[2] The objections taken by Dr. Mansel to the two "unfortunate" illustrations, in reality apply not merely to these two, but to all illustrations drawn from the external world. It must be

[1] *Intellectual System*, II. 518. Ed. Harrison. [2] *Limits of Religious Thought*, p. 333.

acknowledged that there is a difficulty connected with the use of any illustration, taken from our knowledge of extended body, which may be employed to indicate any feature in the knowledge we have, or are declared to have, of the Infinite Being. The difficulty springs very clearly from the contradictory nature of the *objects* with which our knowledge is conversant. The one is extended, and the other unextended,—the one is divisible, the other indivisible; if, therefore, there be a recognition of both forms of existence, and it be found that our knowledge of both has certain common features, it is inevitable, from the different natures of the objects, that there will be certain features of dissimilarity. If, then, an illustration be taken from the knowledge of *extended body*, to explain some feature in our knowledge of the *Infinite Spirit*, it is manifest that in estimating the value of the illustration, we must place out of view those points of diversity which spring from the opposite natures of the objects, and concentrate attention upon the alleged points of similarity in the forms of knowledge. Any criticism which neglects to concentrate attention on the points of asserted *similarity* between the illustration and the declared fact, instead of advancing philosophical inquiry, only perplexes the discussion. This, as it seems to me, is the sole result of Dr. Mansel's criticisms on the two "unfortunate" illustrations. Yet, notwithstanding the danger of misinterpretation arising from the extreme diversity of the objects, I cannot think that such illustrations should be entirely surrendered, since I believe that they give to the patient critic important aid in testing the validity of

the metaphysical doctrine maintained. It is through such hazards that we come at length to the truth.

So far then am I from being inclined to admit that Cudworth's illustration is an unfortunate one, or to withdraw the one which I had used, as coming under the same category, that it seems to me that both illustrations, in common with a multitude more which may be used, are satisfactory, and serviceable for the end contemplated. The point here maintained, in the process of reasoning intended to establish a knowledge of the Infinite Being, is *that it is possible to have a knowledge of an object, that far outstretches the boundaries of that knowledge.* In this way, it is affirmed, man may have a finite knowledge of the Infinite God, and, in order to show more clearly what is understood to be the form of such an exercise of cognitive power, it is maintained that, in many other instances, such, for example, as our recognition of extended bodies, we have a knowledge of objects whose full extent is far beyond our observation. That there may be a searching test of the alleged fact in consciousness, illustrations can be given. That which Cudworth has employed may be taken as a specimen, and many more are lying around us in all directions on the surface of ordinary experience. I have said that we may have a finite knowledge of the Infinite Being, just as we have a limited recognition of the world we inhabit, which is too large to be fully recognised by the mind. The point of similarity between the objects, which alone renders the illustration allowable, is found in their relation to our powers of knowledge, that is to say, in the fact that as the one outstretches the widest range of

cognitive power in any man, so does the other go far beyond any man's power of perception. In so far as the world is extended, whereas the Infinite Being is unextended; in so far as the one is divisible, whereas the other is indivisible; in so far as a line could be drawn around the extended surface embraced in knowledge, whereas no such boundary can be even imagined in the other, as indicating the measure of our knowledge; in so far as the act of perception may be regarded as embracing a *part* of the extended surface, whereas the knowledge of the Infinite Being, if such knowledge there be, cannot be a recognition of a part related to a whole, there is no diversity but what springs from the contradictory nature of the objects: and all these contradictory features must clearly be placed out of account in judging of the illustration drawn from the analogy of our perception of the one, to our knowledge of the other. There is only one point of analogy between the illustration and the truth it is intended to elucidate. As the world is far more immense than our power of perception can embrace, so the Infinite Being in His transcendent excellence is far greater than our cognitive power can embrace; nevertheless, as the world is the object of perception, so is the Infinite Being the object of knowledge. This is the exact form of illustration intended to show that we may have a cognition of an object outstretching the boundaries of our knowledge.

Let the reader now turn back to the criticism of Dr. Mansel, and say how much of that criticism is relevant. All that it contains concerning the relation of part to whole is beside the question, inasmuch as it touches upon

the essential differences of the objects, not at all upon the alleged analogy in the form of knowledge. Then, what is said concerning the possibility of the Infinite being "recognised by some other mind, or by some faculty in man which is not mind," may be set aside, as rather above human philosophy. And after these two deductions are made from the criticism, what remains? Positively nothing, but that last assertion, that "in admitting that we do not recognise the Infinite in its *entire extension*, it is admitted that we do not recognise it *as infinite*." My reply to this is based upon the second particular in this analysis of the conditions of knowledge. If we have *some knowledge* of an object, it is either a knowledge of that object by what it is, or by what it is not; but a knowledge of a thing by what it is not, is impossible; therefore knowledge, of whatever degree, is knowledge of an existence by what it is.

(*b.*) *Knowledge, so far from being always complete, may be of various degrees.* There may be different degrees of knowledge of the same object possessed by different men, on account of the varieties of intellectual power which they may have received; and the degrees of knowledge of the same object may vary in the experience of the same individual, as the result of mental development; but what I wish at present to indicate is the fact, that there may be different degrees of knowledge, according to the relation which our power of cognition may bear to the object to be known. All knowledge implies a recognition of the objects, proportionate to the power of the mental faculties by which they are known. From this condition of the exercise of cognitive power springs

the admitted fact, that knowledge is in one case complete, in another inadequate. The facts of consciousness are entirely against those who seek to embrace the results of every cognitive act within a sharply drawn outline, as though they were capable of being crushed within the boundaries of an exact definition, and thereby liable to all the severity of logical tests in every use which may be made of them. Where such exactness is possible, it is of the utmost consequence that it should be secured; but as the necessary conditions of our knowledge make it impossible that this should be always attained, a sound and complete philosophy must embrace and explain the facts concerning the indefiniteness often characteristic of our knowledge.

The limitation of our powers does not restrict us to a knowledge only of those objects which can be clearly known, but admits of a partial or incomplete knowledge of those which cannot be brought entirely within the capacity of human cognition. This has led to the universally admitted distinction of opposite characteristics of human knowledge, variously expressed by such terms as, clear and obscure, distinct and indistinct, definite and indefinite, adequate and inadequate, partial and complete. It is obvious that these terms have been employed to indicate a distinction in knowledge from somewhat varied points of view. Leibnitz has shown that the various degrees of knowledge admit of classification. He says "knowledge is either obscure or clear; and clear is again either confused or distinct; and distinct is either inadequate or adequate, also either symbolic or intuitive; and if it be at the same time adequate and

intuitive, it is perfect."[1] He thus makes "obscure and clear" the general classification embracing various modifications. Obscure knowledge is that which implies the recognition of the object, without enabling us to distinguish it from other objects; as, for example, one among a bed of flowers, or one among a herd of animals. Clear knowledge is that which enables us to distinguish its object completely from other objects; but that which is clear may be either confused or distinct, according as we are, or are not, able distinctly to recognise the various qualities or attributes belonging to the object; and even if we do distinguish these attributes, our knowledge of them may be either adequate or inadequate, according as we are, or are not, able to recognise them in all their extent. Every one who has studied the subject must acknowledge the masterly and successful manner in which Leibnitz has here distinguished and classified the facts of consciousness. And I imagine that the majority of readers must be convinced that this classification embraces all those characteristics of knowledge which I have maintained as belonging to our recognition of the Infinite Being. As applied to the distinctions which Leibnitz has drawn between the different degrees of knowledge, the doctrine here maintained, is that our knowledge of the Infinite Being is a *clear* knowledge, that is, we clearly distinguish the object of knowledge from every other existence; and, besides this, our knowledge is *distinct*, inasmuch as we are able to distinguish from each other the various attributes of the Divine nature; but, while distinct, our knowledge is *inadequate*,

[1] *Meditationes de Cognitione, Veritate et Ideis*, (*Opera ed. Erdmann*, p. 79.)

because our power of cognition is insufficient to embrace the Infinite in the fulness of His immensity. The Infinite Being is assuredly the object of knowledge, since He is distinguished by us from all other beings, and is known by His possession of essential attributes, but no one will affirm that the knowledge to which we can attain is adequate. Such an assertion, however, is by no means necessary in order to vindicate for the human mind a knowledge of the Supreme Being, since the conditions of knowledge admit of a knowledge which is inadequate. But the analysis of the form of knowledge requires to be carried a step farther, for the purpose of indicating that our *inadequate knowledge* is, on the one hand, *partial*, on the other, *indefinite*. It is a *partial knowledge*, in so far as it does not embrace or comprehend the Infinite within its boundaries; it is an *indefinite knowledge*, in so far as it does not terminate in a sharp boundary line, such as might have been recognised as the exact limit of our cognition.

The knowledge which the mind possesses of the Infinite Being is a partial knowledge. Though it is manifest, because of the testimony which faith gives to the existence of the Deity, and the necessary relation subsisting between faith and intelligence, that the mind must have some knowledge of His nature, it is not less certain both from the conditions of our knowledge, and from the facts of our consciousness, that we can have only a partial recognition, which does not embrace the Infinite in all His extent. The facts of consciousness seem to me to be such as to enable every one, who makes them the object of the slightest consideration, to say, that he knows

something of a Being infinite in power, and wisdom, and moral purity; so that any one who declares that the knowledge of such a witness is, after all, only of a Being limited in power, wisdom, and purity, ventures upon an assertion which is altogether inconsistent with consciousness. But while it is maintained that he knows *something* of an Infinite Being, the witness can have no hesitation in declaring that the knowledge he has is *partial*. If the objects are many with which we have only a limited acquaintance, it is manifest that the Infinite Being must be one of these; and not only so, but whatever be our advancement in the knowledge of His excellencies, its increasing expansion must ever continue to be recognised as only partial in its measure. Self-evident as this seems to me, it has been heavily assailed by those who deny the possibility of a knowledge of the Infinite. In writing to me on this subject, Sir W. Hamilton uses the following words :—"A thing may be partly known, conceived, thought, partly unknown, etc. But *that part* of it only which is thought, can be an object of thought, etc.; whereas *the part* of it not thought, etc., is, as far as thought, etc., is concerned, only tantamount to zero. . . . But you assert (*passim*) that we have a knowledge, a notion of the Infinite; at the same time asserting (*passim*) that this knowledge or notion is 'inadequate,'—'partial,'—'imperfect,'—'limited,'—'not in all its extent,'—'incomplete,'—'only to some extent,'—'in a certain sense,'—'indistinct,' etc. etc. Now, in the first place, this assertion is in contradiction of what you also maintain, that the 'Infinite is

one and indivisible,' that is, that having *no parts*, it cannot be *partially* known. But, in the second place, this also subverts the possibility of conceiving, of knowing the Infinite; for as partial, inadequate, not in all its extent, etc., our conception includes *some part* only of the object supposed Infinite, and does not include the rest."[1] So it is Dr. Mansel argues, "To have a partial knowledge of an object, is to know a part of it, but not the whole. But the part of the Infinite which is supposed to be known, must be itself either Infinite or finite. If it is Infinite, it presents the same difficulties as before. If it is finite, the point in question is conceded, and our consciousness is allowed to be limited to finite objects."[2] Before replying to these criticisms, I may be permitted to call the attention of Dr. Mansel to an extract on this subject from an author whom he is rather fond of quoting as an authority. Bishop Browne had to encounter the same argument, coming from the atheists of his time, and see how he deals with it, while attempting to vindicate his own favourite but one-sided doctrine of knowledge by analogy. "The atheists themselves find their account in laying aside and confounding this analogy; for thus they argue. If God is Infinite, no finite human understanding can have any knowledge at all of him. It cannot know him in the *whole*, because nothing finite can comprehend Infinity; nor can it know any *part* of him, there being no part of Infinity. To which I return the Apostle's answer, that though we cannot be said to know any *part* of him; yet we are truly said to know

[1] *Lectures on Metaphysics*, II. pp. 531-2.
[2] *Limits of Religious Thought*, p. 76.

him *in part*, as we see the reflection of a substance in a looking-glass."[1] If the bishop held a very defective theory concerning the knowledge of the Infinite, as I believe he did, he had at least the right answer to this criticism, based as it is on the logical distinction between parts and wholes.

The fundamental position of Sir W. Hamilton and Dr. Mansel is clearly this, that a "partial knowledge" is a knowledge of a part, and their criticism is to be met by denying this proposition, which can be accurately done on the clearest possible evidence. Most assuredly I hold by the doctrine that "the Infinite is one and indivisible," and I am prepared to accept all the consequences which follow from legitimate reasoning on this truth. But I deny that a partial knowledge is necessarily a knowledge of a part, and that we are, therefore, shut out from a partial knowledge of the Infinite One. If, for example, I see an object at a great distance, I have a partial knowledge of it as an object existing; I may recognise its form, and general appearance, so far as to declare that it is a house; but it is only when I have reached a near point of view that I obtain an adequate knowledge of the details in the structure. In the first case, it is a partial knowledge which is obtained; in the other, the knowledge is complete. So it is, in like manner, that our observations of the heavenly bodies, and all the researches of astronomy, give us only a partial knowledge of the individual planets, leaving many questions unanswered and open for discussion. But partial as the knowledge is which astronomy affords, who would think

[1] *Procedure, Extent, and Limits of the Human Understanding*, p. 30.

of saying that it gives only a knowledge of parts of the heavenly bodies? Again, to advance towards the present subject, every one who believes in an Infinite Creator, at the same time admits that the world is a finite manifestation of His nature. It must be true, therefore, in this case, as it is in reference to our knowledge, that, being finite, it can only be an incomplete or *partial* manifestation of the Infinite Creator. This being admitted, it necessarily follows that the universe, as a partial manifestation of the Infinite Being, is either a manifestation of a part of His nature, or it is not; but, as the Infinite nature has no parts, it cannot be a manifestation merely of a part of His being; therefore, the universe is a partial manifestation of the Infinite One as He exists. So it is that our knowledge, being finite, is only partial; but a partial knowledge is not necessarily a knowledge of a part, and there is nothing either in the conditions of knowledge, or in the nature of the Infinite God, to prevent a knowledge, incomplete or partial as it must be, of His transcendent excellencies. This is so very simple and obvious, that I should not have thought of insisting upon it, but for the fact that Sir W. Hamilton and Dr. Mansel have maintained the very singular opinion, that a partial knowledge is necessarily a knowledge of a part. Were it of any consequence in prosecuting the present discussion, I might linger to inquire whether, in multitudes of cases, a knowledge of a part could be regarded as really a partial knowledge of the whole, since such an inquiry would afford a sufficient number of ludicrous illustrations of what the upholders of the doctrine must be contented to accept as a partial

knowledge of an object; but, more important subjects of investigation await attention.

The knowledge which the mind possesses of the Infinite Being is an indefinite knowledge. It has been already indicated that the quality of indefiniteness may belong to human knowledge, and our knowledge of the Infinite has certainly this characteristic. When we speak of an *indefinite knowledge*, it is manifest that the quality specified belongs essentially to our knowledge, and not in any case to the object known, which cannot by any possibility be indefinite. If it be affirmed that, in a particular instance, our knowledge is indefinite, this is only an abbreviated manner of expressing these two facts, that the object is recognised within the sphere of knowledge, and yet that our exercise of cognitive power, when put upon the utmost stretch at a particular moment, terminates obscurely, in the consciousness of the insufficiency of the knowledge obtained. In this way our knowledge of the Infinite Being is ever indefinite. If I might venture on another illustration from the knowledge of extended objects, without fear of the essential difference between them and the Infinite being seized upon for the purpose of illegitimate criticism, it might be said that our knowledge of the Infinite is not like the recognition of the sharp outline of the distant mountain range, seen against the clear blue sky; but is like our view of the vast expanse of waters, appearing to our restricted vision as if fading away more and more obscurely far in the distance. Of course, in attempting such a mode of illustrating the indefiniteness of our knowledge, the Infinite is not compared to the vast ocean, any more than to the dis-

tant mountain range ; it is only asserted that, keeping out of account the essential difference between the objects, the indefiniteness of our knowledge of the Infinite is similar to that which characterizes our recognition of the waters of the sea, when the eye discovers no shore.

An analysis of this form of knowledge may reveal certain facts worthy of distinct recognition in connexion with this part of the subject. There is a positive knowledge possessed by the mind—a knowledge, therefore, of a particular object, and, at the same time, a consciousness of a peculiar characteristic adhering to the knowledge obtained. This knowledge may be regarded in a twofold aspect, according as it is considered as a knowledge of a certain *object*, distinguished from others, or as a peculiar *form of knowledge*, distinguished from other kinds of knowledge. In so far as it applies to the object, it is a knowledge of the Infinite Being, recognising certain attributes as belonging to His nature ; and which, while it is limited, does not involve the recognition of limits in the object, but, on the contrary, implies a consciousness that there are no boundaries in the object, at that point where the mind sensibly reaches the full measure of its ability. In so far as the form of knowledge is exclusively considered, it is an *indefinite* knowledge, limited most assuredly, yet incapable of having its limits sharply marked out. In this exercise of cognitive power, the mind is struggling with an object too vast for it, and therefore never reaching limits which it can embrace within the range of its capacity, and around which the mind could take its survey, conscious of possessing a complete and definite knowledge. The mind may, time

after time, resume the effort to extend its knowledge of the Transcendent Object, and may return in each instance with an increased knowledge of the wondrous excellence which must inspire all hearts with awe; still, the mind is conscious that the knowledge possessed does not appear within exact limits, such as may be clearly recognised by itself, or accurately defined to others. The knowledge is both clear and distinct (using these terms according to the distinction drawn by Leibnitz), but it is indefinite in its outline. It is a *clear* knowledge of the Infinite Being, as distinguished from all other beings; and a *distinct* knowledge of certain attributes, at once infinite in themselves, and distinguished from each other; but, an *indefinite* knowledge of these attributes, and of the entire Divine nature. The generally received principle, that the sphere of our faith is much wider than that of our knowledge, has its highest application in reference to the Infinite Being; we cannot know to the full extent the immeasurable excellence to which our faith bears testimony; but, inasmuch as we have a necessary belief in His existence, we must have some knowledge of the Infinite One; whereas, because the object of knowledge is infinite, the knowledge we have must ever be indefinite.

One fact more requires to be observed, that *our knowledge of the Infinite, however far extended, must be equally indefinite.* From its very commencement, our knowledge must be *clear*, that is, it must involve a recognition of the Infinite God, as quite apart from, and altogether above, every other being; in proportion as our knowledge extends, it becomes more and more *distinct*, that is, it involves a more ample recognition of the vari-

ous attributes of the Deity, in their nature, their distinction from each other, and their mutual relation to each other; but, however it may extend, it will continue indefinite in exactly the same degree as before, and from exactly the same cause, that there are no limits discovered or discoverable, which could give definiteness to our knowledge. Hence it is, that while all know God, there are in the possession of men, according to the gifts they have received and the use they have made of them, different degrees of that knowledge, that is to say, knowledge varying in distinctness, but, in the case of all, the knowledge is equally indefinite. And so, in like manner, the same individual may advance further and further in knowledge of the Infinite Being, yet he must constantly feel that his knowledge is of "that of which there is always something beyond;" for, whatever may come forth more distinctly into the sphere of knowledge, he is conscious that the boundary of his knowledge fades away gradually and indefinitely, in the earnest struggle of the mind to know more of what immeasurably outstretches the highest efforts of finite intelligence.

Before passing from this portion of the subject, it seems necessary to remark, that those who hold the doctrine advocated in these pages, are oftentimes represented as confounding the indefinite with the infinite. This representation is made both by Sir W. Hamilton and Dr. Mansel, and in both instances, singularly enough, it is done in connexion with the prosecution of a logical experiment concerning the possibility of thought advancing from the smaller to the greater, and not really in connexion with any searching inquiry into the possibility of

a knowledge of the One Infinite Existence. Hamilton presents it in connexion with an experiment concerning the possibility of conceiving "the infinite regress of time;" Dr. Mansel introduces it in connexion with a similar experiment concerning the possibility of representing a human attribute "magnified to infinity." In neither of these cases is the question concerning the possibility of a knowledge of the Infinite Being properly introduced; but on this fact there is no need to dwell, as I desire simply to lift a protest against any attempt to confound the indefinite with the infinite, or to compare the two together, as though they were both objects having an independent existence. The Indefinite is a quality of knowledge, which an object cannot have: the Infinite is a quality of an object, which the knowledge cannot possess. This Sir W. Hamilton affirms most explicitly,[1] and he is bound in consistency to acknowledge it in all his reasoning. So far from doing this, however, it will be found that he has violated the distinction. After referring to the experiment concerning a conception of the infinite regress of time, he says: "If we dream of effecting this, we only deceive ourselves by substituting the *indefinite* for the infinite, than which no two *notions* can be more opposed."[2] This very assertion of their distinction involves a violation of the distinction itself, when the indefinite and the infinite are spoken of as "two notions." We may have an indefinite "notion," but we cannot have an infinite "notion." Surely no man can, by any possibility of reasoning, mistake an "indefinite notion" for an "infinite object;" but any man pleads for the truth, as it

[1] *Discussions*, p. 14, and *Logic*, I. p. 103.

[2] *Discussions*, p. 30.

seems to me, who argues that we have an "indefinite notion" of an "infinite object."

Dr. Mansel also treats of this distinction in a way fitted to mislead. Speaking of an attempt to represent human attributes "magnified to infinity," which of course would be a human effort to make an infinite, and altogether absurd even as an hypothesis, he says,—"We can conceive such attributes, at the utmost only *indefinitely;* that is to say, we may withdraw our thought, for the moment, from the fact of their being limited, but we cannot conceive them as *infinite;* that is to say, we cannot positively think of the absence of the limit."[1] I should fancy that there is no one who would maintain that we reach a knowledge of the Infinite Being by attempting to represent in thought human attributes "magnified to infinity," therefore there is no need to dwell upon a theory which has yet to go a-begging for a supporter, but it is needful to take a glance at the use made of the two terms, and thereafter at the correlative exposition of them. It is better that this should be done now, rather than that it should be delayed till I am considering the characteristics of thought proper. The first thing to be noticed is, that Dr. Mansel is here treating of what it is possible and what impossible for us to "*conceive.*" If it be his real purpose to determine this, the *object* may be kept out of view meanwhile, and this may be all the more readily done as a human attribute "magnified to infinity" is a very questionable object indeed. The assertion, then, takes this form,—"We can conceive, at the utmost, only *indefinitely*, but we

[1] *Limits of Religious Thought*, p. 91.

cannot conceive *as infinite.*" The mere sound of that last expression, if the sentence be heard uttered, or the very appearance of it, if the sentence be read, is enough to betray the lurking ambiguity. Either the object is coming in upon us under false pretences, or the statement does not lead to the conclusion the author obviously intends. If, in the one case, he speaks of the quality of *conception*, and in the other of the quality of the *object*, there is no right comparison instituted, either between the degrees of conception, or the qualities of objects. If the comparison be really between different degrees of conception, when it is said that "we *can* conceive, at the utmost, only *indefinitely*," I grant it; and if it be said that "we *cannot* conceive *infinitely*," which is the real contrast, I also grant it; for it is virtually saying the same thing in different words. Because our mind is finite, we can neither know *infinitely*, nor conceive *infinitely*, as every one admits; but, this does not prove what the author intended.

However, this does not seem completely to indicate Dr. Mansel's meaning, and accordingly it may be considered whether the first clause is not to be understood as applying to our *conception*, and the other to the *object*. If this be meant, the statement is the following: "We can conceive, at the utmost, only *indefinitely*; but we cannot conceive (the object) *as infinite.*" If this last expression is not equivalent to "infinitely," the statement must imply an argument from the indefiniteness of conception, to determine the measure of the object, which conception cannot reach. Because, at the utmost, we can conceive only indefinitely, we cannot conceive an object "as infinite." To this I reply, that it is impossible to reason from the *in-*

definiteness of our conception to a conclusion that the object is either finite or infinite. The object may be either the one or the other, but the fact that our conception is indefinite cannot prove that it is either. Dr. Mansel is entirely astray in attempting such proof, and I think no injustice is done to the logic of the *Limits of Religious Thought* in saying, that the reasoning in this case is an exact type of what is generally employed by its author to prove the impossibility of a knowledge or conception of the Infinite. It is unwarrantable to infer, because our conception is indefinite, that the object must be finite; that is, that our conception cannot be a conception of the Infinite, or that which exists "as infinite." Since it is admitted on both sides that we can conceive, at the utmost, only indefinitely, this quality of our conception must be understood as applying in the last clause, which, fully expressed, must stand thus,—"We cannot (*indefinitely*) conceive (the object) *as infinite.*" Now, the only way of determining the truth of this statement is by simply inquiring, what is the object? Is it infinite, or is it not? As we have a conception of the object, and as our conception is indefinite, that is to say, does not involve the discovery of limits in the object, the question whether the object be limited or not, must be determined on some other authority. Here, as it seems to me, it must be felt by every one, the difficulty arises which Sir W. Hamilton has pressed upon my attention in his criticism,—If our knowledge or conception be limited and indefinite, how can we be assured that the object is infinite? His words are these: "Neither can I surmise how we should ever

come to know that the object thus partially conceived *is* in itself infinite; seeing we are denied the power of knowing it *as* infinite, that is, not partially, not inadequately, not in some parts only of its extent, etc., but totally, adequately, in its whole extent, etc.; in other words, under the criteria compatible with the supposition of infinitude. For, as you truly observe, "everything *short* of the Infinite is limited."[1] The difficulty is manifest, and there is but one way of removing it; to my mind, a way which removes it entirely. Since it is maintained that our *knowledge* of the Infinite Being is partial and indefinite, it must be difficult for any one to surmise how we can ever come to *know* the object in all the extent of its infinitude; but, knowing as we do only partially, we must have some *assurance* that the object known is infinite, and this assurance is *faith*,—a necessary belief implanted in the mind,—which Sir W. Hamilton admits has a sphere "much more extensive than the sphere of our knowledge," on account of which the Infinite "is, must, and ought to be, *believed*." There appears to me the most perfect consistency in the theory which I had maintained, and which I still defend with unabated confidence in its truth. We have the testimony of faith to the existence of the Infinite Being, and on that testimony the whole form of our thought and emotion concerning the Deity is moulded. We have a knowledge of the Infinite One as distinguished from all other beings –a knowledge which, though partial and indefinite, is still a knowledge of Him as He is; and, since His transcendent excellencies far outstretch all that our

[1] *Lectures on Metaphysics*, II. p. 532.

limited power can attain, our knowledge—clear in its recognition of His existence, distinct in its recognition of different attributes of His nature, but indefinite in itself, because inadequate—is a knowledge which rests securely on the basis of a necessary belief in the Infinite God.

The passage from Dr. Mansel's work, on which I am at present commenting, raises its difficulties altogether in connexion with a hypothetical object, which every one must repudiate, "a human attribute magnified to infinity." But, in testing the validity of the reasoning, it may be well to admit the questionable object to its place in the author's statement, that it may appear how the object bears its part in the argument. This may be worthy of a moment's delay, if it enable the reader to obtain a more searching glance into the real merits of the question at this vital part in the discussion. I will, therefore, insert the author's designation of the object, which thus assumes the following form: "We can conceive attributes magnified to infinity, at the utmost, only *indefinitely;* but we cannot conceive attributes magnified to infinity *as infinite.*" A critic has nothing whatever to do with the possibility of magnifying human attributes to infinity; but, if the argument is worth anything, these objects designated attributes are infinite; and, besides, these infinite "attributes" are indefinitely conceived. Either they are indefinitely conceived as what they are, or as what they are not; but, as they cannot be conceived as what they are not, they are indefinitely conceived as infinite, or, what is exactly the same thing, we have an indefinite conception of attributes which are infinite, or "have been magnified to infinity." And now, if the

reader will turn to the author's exposition in the two subsidiary clauses of the quotation, it must be apparent that Dr. Mansel has completely perverted his own illustration. The assertion, that we can conceive attributes "magnified to infinity" only indefinitely, and not as infinite, is there represented in the following form: "We may *withdraw* our thought, for the moment, from the *fact* of their being limited, but we cannot positively think of the absence of the limit." Now, *ex hypothesi*, the attributes are "magnified to infinity." And, this being the case, we conceive of them indefinitely, not because we withdraw our attention from limits which are there, but because, with the utmost struggle to reach limits, we find none there.

(*c.*) *Our knowledge of the Infinite Being, while limited and indefinite, is capable of continuous expansion.* As we are conscious of no limits in the Deity, but rest in the certain assurance of His infinitude, we are conscious of no restraint, such as would finally terminate our advancement in the knowledge of His boundless excellence. We discover no impassable barrier to farther progress, staying us in our contemplation, and saying, thus far shall ye go, and no farther,—thus much shall ye know, but nothing more. We are, indeed, restricted by the conditions which have been attached to the operation of our cognitive powers, and which it is necessarily impossible for these powers on any occasion to overleap, but these are no hindrance to continuous progress. In harmony with these conditions, we find that persevering contemplation and study secure for us continuous progress in knowledge; ever as we return to renewed effort,

we find the same freedom granted to us, for the enlargement of the sphere of our acquaintance with the Divine excellence; and still as we advance, we see more and more clearly before us, the soul-inspiring prospect of the indefinite expansion of this form of knowledge, which, to an intelligent creature bearing the image of God, must ever seem transcendently attractive. With eternal existence before us, the prospect is intellectually, morally, and spiritually a glorious one. The conditions which the Creator has attached to our cognitive powers, serve only to guide and not to hinder them in their exercise; and if the restraints of a feeble body, the distractions of manifold cares, and the darkness of a sinful condition, be only taken away, we have faculties which fit us for ceaseless progress in the sublimest of all human studies. With the knowledge we have now, with the advance we make in it, and with eternity before us, we are already in the course which leads onward toward all this. And herein we discover that the dictates of a sound philosophy are in perfect harmony with the authoritative declaration of Scripture,—"This is life eternal, to know thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent."

4th, Knowledge is either à priori or à posteriori in its origin. It comes either from the depths of man's own nature, or it is the result of observation and reflection. There is a fountain of knowledge in man himself, giving forth the first principles of all knowledge; and there is a constant drawing of knowledge from the streams of experience. This twofold doctrine concerning the origin of knowledge must now, I think, with all deference to the remaining disciples of the sensational

school, be regarded as finally established; and my readers are already aware that the theory here maintained concerning the possibility of a knowledge of the Infinite Being is based upon the acknowledged distinction between these two sources of knowledge. It seems to me, indeed, that but for the fact that man possesses in his own nature the first principles of knowledge, placed within his being by the Creator himself, and superior to individual experience, we could not by any possibility have attained to the recognition of an Infinite Being. We could only have known our existence and the facts connected with the existence of the universe around us, but we could not have inferred even the existence of a cause adequate to produce all that our knowledge embraced; we certainly could not have attained to the knowledge of a Being essentially infinite. Starting from a purely sensational basis, it was not wonderful that Hobbes should have denied that we can have any "idea or conception" of the Infinite; and that Locke, labouring to struggle free from such a result of the theory, should have involved himself in manifold contradictions; and that Bishop Browne should have settled in the insufficient theory of knowledge by analogy, as the highest attainment of man in seeking for a knowledge of the Deity. The following is the argument of Hobbes:— "Whatever we imagine *is finite*. There is, therefore, no idea or conception which can arise from this word *Infinite*. The human mind cannot comprehend the idea (image) of infinite magnitude, nor conceive infinite swiftness, infinite force, infinite time, or infinite power. When we say that anything is infinite, we only mean by

this that we are not able to conceive the bounds or limits of that thing, or to conceive any other thing except our own impotence. Therefore, the name of God is not employed that we may conceive of Him, for He is incomprehensible, and His greatness and power inconceivable, but that we may honour Him. And since, as I have said above, what we conceive has been first perceived in sensation; there is no conception of a thing possible to man which has not first been perceived by the senses. Therefore, nobody is able to conceive anything except as in a certain place, and distinguished by some finite size, and divisible into parts."[1] Here is the legitimate fruit of the sensational theory, which the men of the seventeenth century were invited to pluck as the wholesome production of a sound philosophy. Is the speculation, and, above all, is the "word-juggling" among the conditions of thought, prevalent in the nineteenth century, to carry us back to the same miserable results? Are we to go down low enough in these days to take our position where Hobbes and the disciples of his sickening materialism were contented to halt, declaring that "the name of God is not employed that we may *conceive* of Him, but that we may *honour* Him"? It is unnecessary to inquire what kind of honour it was which Hobbes ascribed to the Deity, but it is not unreasonable to ask what kind of honour that can be which is divorced from intelligence? Nay, rather, how is it possible to honour a Being of whom we cannot form the slightest conception? There is no room to marvel, if the practical result of affirming that the intellect can have

[1] *Leviathan*, Cap. 3.

no conception of the Deity be, that the heart renders Him no honour. Such a theory concerning the name of God was quite consistent with the fundamental position of Hobbes, that "what we *conceive* has been first *perceived* in sensation." If it be true that "no conception of a thing is possible to man which has not been first perceived by the senses," it will follow that all knowledge is restricted to things material, and we are shut up to deny the existence of mind, and therefore of the Infinite Spirit. Hobbes did not hesitate to accept the results of his theory, but we are happily far past the time when the theory is regarded as worthy of serious consideration. It may be accepted as a settled point in philosophy, that all knowledge does not come from experience, and, much less, exclusively from sensation. But, besides, I apprehend that, while escaping the materialism of Hobbes, no attempt at tracing a path through a labyrinth, which doubles incessantly among the conditions of thought, can bring us back to his doctrine, that "when we say that anything is infinite we only mean by this that we are not able to conceive the bounds or limits of that thing," and "that the name of God is not employed that we may conceive of Him." It may well appear strange that we are at the present time discussing once more, questions which were agitated centuries before the philosopher of Malmesbury was born; but I believe the result will show, that they who seek now to impress on the public mind the conviction that a knowledge of the Infinite is impossible to man, are engaged in a hopeless task.

Locke enlarged the statement of the origin of know-

ledge to embrace not only *sensation*, to which Hobbes had restricted himself, but also *reflection*, though he in like manner maintained that all knowledge comes from *experience*. He widened the basis of the sensational philosophy to that extent which alone gives the chance of its assuming in the eyes of men generally an appearance of plausibility. But, if all our knowledge come from experience, it is plain that there is no source by which a knowledge of the Infinite Being can be said, with any show of consistency, to come to the human mind. Locke knew too much of what is really involved in human nature to be able to confine himself to the trammels of his system, and to his honour as a man, though, to the injury of his theory, he insisted upon much important truth which unaided experience cannot give. The consequence is, that the assertion of what he necessarily believed, and the attempt to maintain the completeness of his theory of the origin of knowledge, involved him in numerous inconsistencies, nowhere more numerous than when he came to treat of Infinity. It is of Infinity that he speaks, and not of the Infinite ; and he holds that we have an idea of Infinity, but no idea of what is infinite. After affirming that "our idea of space, duration, and number come from sensation and reflection," he says, that "even the idea we have of Infinity, how remote soever it may seem to be from any object of sense, or operation of our mind, has nevertheless, as all our other ideas, its original there."[1] The result of attempting to bring an idea of Infinity from such an "original," may be seen from the following ex-

[1] *Essay*, chap. xvii. p. 22.

tract: "Finite and Infinite seem to me to be looked upon by the mind as the modes of *quantity*, and to be attributed primarily in their first designation *only to those things which have parts*, and are capable of increase or diminution, by the addition or subtraction of any the least part; and such are the ideas of space, duration, and number. 'Tis true, that *we cannot but be assured*, that the great God, of whom, and from whom, are all things, is incomprehensibly infinite. But yet, when we apply to that first and supreme Being, our idea of Infinite, in our weak and narrow thoughts, we do it primarily in respect of His duration and ubiquity; and, I think, *more figuratively* to His power, wisdom, and goodness, and other attributes, which are properly inexhaustible and incomprehensible, etc. For when we call them infinite, we have no other idea of this Infinity, but what carries with it some reflection on, or intimation of, that *number* or *extent* of the *acts* or objects of God's power, wisdom, and goodness, which can never be supposed so great, or so many, which these attributes will not always surmount and exceed, let us multiply them in our thoughts as far as we can, with all the infinity of endless number."[1] To affirm that "Infinite" is a mode of quantity, that it is primarily attributed only to those things which have parts; things capable of increase or diminution; things to which there can be an addition of parts, or from which there can be subtraction of parts, is to make statements which may come naturally from a system which declares that all knowledge is drawn from sensation and reflection, but they are altogether indefen-

[1] *Essay*, chap. xvii. p. 1.

sible, and assuredly involve the use of the term Infinite *very* "figuratively." These must be curious specimens of infinite "things," which can be increased and diminished; and that must be a very novel way of attaining to an idea of the infinity of these "things," which is obtained by the singular mental feat of adding to them, or subtracting from them, certain quantities of their existence. Equally untenable is the attempt to carry this sensational mode of reasoning into application regarding our knowledge of the Deity, when it is said that we attain to the idea of the Infinity of His attributes, by "reflection on and intimation of" the "number or extent of the acts or objects" of these attributes. It is an admitted fact that the "acts, or objects" which have sprung from the exercise of the Divine attributes are limited, and therefore cannot of themselves lead to a conception of the infinity of such attributes; while, at the same time, it is manifest that there must be a preceding conviction that these attributes are infinite, before we can be satisfied that no acts or objects can be "supposed so great" as to exceed the accomplishment of such attributes. But the noble and profound John Locke shook himself free from the restraints of a system far too narrow for the fulness of the truth, and uttered no longer the deliverance of a poor sensational philosophy, but the irrepressible conviction which sprang from the depths of his own nature, when he said, "We cannot but be assured, that the great God, of whom, and from whom, are all things, is incomprehensibly infinite."

Bishop Browne, whom Dr. Mansel often quotes as an authority, has his whole theory invalidated by the insuf-

ficiency of the sensational basis on which he altogether rests it. The Bishop was an unshrinking upholder of the sensational maxim, -"*Nihil est in intellectu, quod non fuit prius in sensu.*" He says: "Our five senses, though common to us with brutes, are however the *only source and inlets* of those ideas, which are the entire groundwork of all our knowledge, both human and divine."[1] With Browne, an "idea" is a "similitude or resemblance" of an object recognised by the senses.[2] It may well be cause for wonder, how, from such a starting point, men rose to the acknowledgment of an Infinite Being. Browne supposed that he had surmounted the difficulty, and explains his method in the following terms: "Properly speaking, we have no idea of God; insomuch that we come to the knowledge of His very *existence*, not from any idea we have of Him, or from any direct *intuition* of the intellect, but from the observation and reasoning of the mind upon the ideas of sensation; that is, from our reasoning upon the works of this visible creation, and for want of any simple and direct idea of Him, we from thence form to ourselves an indirect, *analogous*, and very complex notion of Him."[3] This is the description of what is clearly a very insufficient process by which to reach a notion of the Divine Being. Undoubtedly the works of God help us greatly in attaining a knowledge of the Deity himself, but if we can reach nothing more than inferences from the facts presented by our senses, there can never be any explanation of our belief in the Infinite One. And yet, so strangely

[1] *The Procedure, Extent, and Limits of the Human Understanding*, p. 55. [2] *Ibid.* p. 59. [3] *Ibid.* p. 81.

have sensational philosophers forgotten their five senses, and trusted to something else than their theories, when emergency required, that the very next words after those just quoted from Browne are these,—"God is in himself simple and uncompounded." In so far as the senses provided the materials for all Browne's philosophy, they gave him no warrant whatever for such a declaration as this; in so far as the author ventures upon the statement as self-evident, he rises, like Locke, above his theory, and bears testimony to the existence in human nature of something better than sensationalism. Browne held many opinions similar to those which Sir W. Hamilton advocated, and it was natural enough for Dr. Mansel to quote from him as an authority; but it is necessary to remember that the grounds on which Browne rests his whole theory, and argues against any direct knowledge of the Infinite, are quite different from those taken by Hamilton and Dr. Mansel. Browne maintained that we can have no direct knowledge of God, simply because we cannot *see* Him, just as he held that we cannot have "even the least direct idea or perception of the purely spiritual part of us, nor do we discern any more of its real substance than we do that of an angel."[1] Browne needed an argument to prove the existence of his own mind, before he could be persuaded that he had any mind. So little did he admit a direct knowledge of his own mind, that, by some ingenious method, his mind had to "argue and infer" its own existence; in other words, he "argued and inferred" the existence of that power by which he "argued and inferred."

[1] *The Procedure, Extent, and Limits of the Human Understanding*, p. 97.

5th, Knowledge by analogy is a special form of mediate knowledge. The distinction between knowledge mediate and immediate was briefly indicated above, and now, before closing this review of the characteristics and conditions of human knowledge, it is necessary to consider the nature of knowledge by analogy, and the theory which its distinctive features have led Bishop Browne to propose, in explanation of the knowledge which we can have of the Deity. The Bishop's theory is, that we can have no direct knowledge of God, and that the only knowledge of the Deity possible to us is that which may be obtained from a recognition of the *analogy* subsisting between our own intellectual nature and that of the Divine Being. This theory is a superstructure raised upon the sensational basis. Bishop Browne held that the mind is originally a *tabula rasa*, like a sheet of white paper, upon which not even a single mark could be found; and therefore the mind is entirely dependent upon what comes in to it from the outer world, and upon the use which it can make of these materials by exercising its own powers. It seems to me altogether unaccountable, how, on such a basis as this, it was found possible to rise to any sure conviction of the existence of God at all; and still more unaccountable, how it could be established, on the supposition of the Divine existence, that there is an analogy between Divine nature and human nature. But, passing from the insufficient foundation on which the Bishop's theory rests, I am more concerned, at this point, to inquire what is involved in knowledge by analogy, which is alleged to be the only form of knowledge which man can attain of things Divine.

Any theory which affirms that our knowledge of God is altogether attained by analogy, must in some way imply that God exists, and that there is some analogy between our nature and His. Let us suppose these two propositions granted as most certainly true, although the evidence of their truth may be held to rest on very different grounds from those on which Browne has attempted to place them, and the way is open for a critical examination of this theory of knowledge by analogy. The Bishop presents us with the following definition: "Analogy in general, is the substituting the idea or conception of one thing, to stand for and represent another, on account of a true resemblance and correspondent reality in the very nature of the things compared."[1] Applying this definition to the doctrine, that it is by such analogy alone we attain to a knowledge of the Deity, these three things are affirmed, that the Divine nature and human nature are "compared,"—that, as the result of that comparison, "a true resemblance and correspondent reality" are found to exist "in the very nature of the things compared,"—and that, on account of the discovery of this "true resemblance," "the idea or conception" of the one nature is made "to stand for and represent" the other. This theory, like that which makes beauty depend upon association, answers itself. If it be by a comparison of the objects, that we discover the resemblance subsisting between them, we are not dependent exclusively on analogy for the knowledge we possess of them. All that

[1] *Things Divine and Supernatural conceived by Analogy with Things Natural and Human*, p. 2.

is needed to prove the insufficiency of this theory, is to illustrate the application of this criticism. Analogy cannot be the origin of our knowledge of anything, for it presupposes a knowledge of both of the objects, in order that they may be compared, and their resemblance discovered. Analogy may help us to a fuller knowledge of that which is already known in some measure; but it cannot give us a knowledge of that which is otherwise entirely unknown. In this way Butler has very properly used Analogy to show the similarity between the moral system of things, as manifested by natural reason and by revelation. But the very attempt to trace the analogy between the light of nature and that of revelation, implies that both are separately known, distinguished, and compared. So it must be in the case before us. If we have a knowledge of the Divine nature by analogy, we must have a knowledge which is above analogy, and Bishop Browne's theory breaks down. That there is such an analogy between human nature and the Divine, as that which he has so ably indicated, I certainly admit,—that we do, by means of this analogy, attain to clearer views of the Divine nature, is no less certain,—but, that analogy gives us the only form of knowledge we possess, I unhesitatingly deny. A few observations may suffice to indicate in what respects Bishop Browne's theory comes short of a full explanation of the facts of consciousness.

(*a.*) *We are able to decide to what extent the analogy holds.* The comparison between the Divine nature and the human, which must be possible from some wider basis than Browne acknowledged, and which is necessary

in order to discover resemblance between them, implies the power to recognise the degree of similarity existing in the various aspects of resemblance. So conscious was our author of this fact, that he is frequently found explaining the measure of analogy between the human and Divine in a particular instance. And yet he declares that we do not know the ground of the analogy, or the degrees of it. For example, he says: "Wherein the real ground of this analogy consists, and what the degrees of it are, is as incomprehensible as the real nature of God."[1] And again: "The particular similitude and precise correspondency which is the ground of that Divine analogy by which we transfer our conceptions and words from earth to heaven, and from man to God, is not actually *unknown*, but as *inconceivable* to us as those Divine things themselves which it serves to represent."[2] In this way, the author declares that we know God by *analogy*, and nevertheless "the particular similitude and precise correspondency" between the human nature and the Divine, is asserted to be not only "unknown," but even "inconceivable." A more complete contradiction there could not be, than to affirm that we know by analogy, while we do not know what the analogy is. If this were true, the Bishop might have embraced his theory within very short compass; but a perusal of his works is all that is needed, to show that he was not able consistently to maintain the doctrine that the ground of the similitude is unknown. Any discovery of analogy must be a recognition of the similitude really subsisting between

[1] *The Procedure, Extent, and Limits of the Human Understanding*, p. 31.

[2] *Analogy*, p. 5.

human nature and the Divine. Speaking in a general way of the knowledge we can have, he says: "The analogy by which we form conceptions of the Divine nature and perfections is, comparatively speaking, *very remote and faint*, in proportion only to the present frail and imperfect state of our humanity, who can form conceptions of God no otherwise than from those conceptions we find in ourselves."[1] In so far as he treats of the analogy as it is known to exist in special instances, Browne betrays how impossible it is to keep by his assertion of complete ignorance of the degree of analogy. For example, when referring to the analogy which may exist between our emotions, and those of which God is the subject, he says: "Though our passions are not transferred to the Divine nature as *fully* as the operations of the intellect and will, yet is God not so grossly represented by them as by our bodily parts; nor is the language of our passions then purely figurative and metaphorical, but carries in it a good degree of *analogy*. For though there are, literally speaking, no such passions in God as love or hatred, joy or anger, or pity; yet there may be inconceivable perfections in Him some way *answerable* to what those passions are in us, under a due regulation and subjection to reason."[2] There is a strange mixture of positive assertion and uncertain hesitation in this passage, which is the natural result of want of harmony between the different parts of the theory maintained. Our passions are not transferred to the Divine nature "as fully" as some of the other mental characteristics, yet between them and the emotions of the Divine

[1] *Analogy*, p. 37. [2] *Ibid.* p. 45.

Being there is "a good degree of analogy." How did Browne come to affirm this, if, as he declares, the degrees of analogy are incomprehensible? But still further, how are we to account for the bold affirmation, accompanied by the trembling hesitancy, in the next sentence? How could Browne ascertain that there are no such emotions as love, hatred, joy, anger, and pity in the Divine nature; and, when he had maintained that there is "a good degree of analogy" between these passions in us and similar emotions in God, how did he veer round to an uncertain form of language which seems to leave all in doubt, declaring only that "there *may be inconceivable perfections* in Him, some way answerable to what those passions are in us"? Either we do know that some analogy exists, and we can declare what it is; or, we are unable to discover any "good degree of analogy" between emotions human and Divine, and have no warrant to assert its existence.

On account of these two contradictory statements, that we know by analogy, and that we do not know the ground or measure of that analogy, Browne has been led to maintain that our knowledge of the intellectual and moral perfections of the Deity is nothing more than a transference of our own intellectual and moral powers to God. He asks whether, when a man "would think or speak of the intellectual and moral perfections of the Divinity, he doth not proceed after this manner, by first observing what are the faculties, and operations, and excellencies of his own mind, and then *transferring them* likewise to the Divine Being, by *substituting them* as so many images or representations of those infinite perfec-

tions in him?"[1] This is a most astonishing description of the method of acquiring knowledge by analogy. It does not indicate the discovery of any analogy whatever, or even the acquisition of any kind or degree of knowledge. For a man to attempt in thought to "transfer" his "faculties, operations, and excellencies" of mind, to the Deity; to "substitute" them as images of infinite perfections in God, instead of regarding them as what they are, is to carry out a course of thought which inevitably leads to the most glaring error. In this way each man would be left to represent for himself a god of his own making, which cannot be the case, and the mere suggestion of which is at complete variance from any conception of God. If the highest possible effort of the mind to conceive of the Deity be an attempt to transfer our own qualities to another being, the possibility of the conception of a God vanishes; our reverence for the Deity comes to an end; and the whole structure of our own moral and religious nature is levelled in the dust. A belief in God's existence, coming from a source higher than experience or inference, there must be; and also an intelligent recognition of the nature of that God, in perfect harmony with the original belief, before it is possible for us to discover any similitude between our own nature and that of the Infinite One. Analogy cannot *extend the sphere* of our knowledge, though it is of much value in helping us to a *clearer degree* of knowledge already possessed, but imperfect in its measure. And the first condition of such analogy is, that we be able to determine the extent of resemblance between the

[1] *Analogy*, p. 61.

objects compared. The discovery of analogy may certainly advance from one degree to another, but the recognition of a definite degree of similarity between objects, is the first requisite of knowledge by analogy. The fact that we possess not only an intelligent, but also a moral nature, certainly enables us to attain clearer views of God's excellence than we could otherwise have done ; but a conception of the Deity must first be given us in our intelligence, before it is possible for us to make use of analogical reasoning concerning the resemblance between our nature and the Divine.

(*b.*) *We are able to decide where the analogy fails.* In comparing the human nature with the Divine, the recognition of similitude in certain aspects, involves also the discovery of diversity in other respects, and thereby implies a knowledge of both, in some manner distinct from analogy. If Bishop Browne overlooks this conclusion, he at least admits the facts upon which it rests. Though we know God as the Infinite Intelligence, and have a clearer recognition of Him as such, from the analogy which subsists between our own intelligent nature and His, we do not attribute to Him such processes as those of reasoning, or remembering, and in these respects we perceive that the analogy fails. And so, in like manner, Browne admits that while we recognise an analogy between goodness and justice as they exist in man and in God, we also discover that the resemblance is not complete, and that justice and goodness in human nature are, in many respects, quite distinct from what these attributes are in God.[1] If this truth be not dis-

[1] *Analogy*, pp. 331, 336.

covered by a knowledge superior to that which is analogical, I know not how it can be acquired.

(c.) *We are in possession of truth concerning the Deity, altogether above what the analogy involves.* Not only do we discover that there is very much in human nature which is not true of the Divine nature, but we are in possession of knowledge regarding characteristics of Divinity, which are completely above everything which belongs to man. It seems very singular how Bishop Browne could fail to see the insufficiency of his theory in this respect, and overlook the very powerful acknowledgment of a Supreme Being which lies deep in the nature of man. His sensational philosophy blinded his eyes to the true authority for the being of God, and logical consistency in carrying out his theory, made him overlook very much of what is actually in possession of man, which could not be shown to spring from analogical research. Yet both of his works contain very frequent admission of elements of knowledge quite above analogy. For example, he affirms that "there are incomprehensible perfections in the Divine nature, answerable to what power, and wisdom, and goodness are in us," and, rising above analogy, he declares God's power to be different from that which we possess, and His wisdom different from that which we have, and His goodness altogether distinct from that which belongs to us.[1] In all this it is manifestly implied that his comparison of the two has led, not only to the discovery of similitude, but also to the recognition of characteristics of immeasurable excellence in the Divine nature, entirely above what is

[1] *The Procedure, Extent, and Limits of the Human Understanding*, p. 84.

human. How such knowledge could be attained on a theory exclusively sensational and analogical, it seems to me impossible to discover. And true, as it is, beyond all doubt, that omnipotence, omniscience, and omnipresence belong to God, it is difficult to see how Browne could affirm this, when he declared that we can have no knowledge, either direct or by analogy of such attributes,[1] and he had nothing but his five senses to appeal to as the guarantee of positive truth. But there can be no clearer proof of the inadequacy of his theory, than his attempt, in accordance with it, to explain how we conceive "the several relations God bears to mankind." He says, that in thinking of God as our Creator we conceive the work of creation "by that of a man's making a statue, or any other work of art;" that our conception of God as "our Governor" is taken from that of an "earthly monarch;" that our conception of the "Supreme Deity" as our "Judge" "is taken originally from that we have of a man's sitting upon a bench for the trial of criminals, and pronouncing an impartial sentence of absolution or condemnation, according to the forms in our courts of judicature."[2] Every one must be conscious in a moment of the inadequacy of such explanations of the conceptions we have of the Deity. So far from admitting that we know God by such analogy, I should take each one of these cases of comparison to illustrate, by very contrast, the high superiority of our conception of God to that which we have of every other being.

I have thus at considerable length investigated the

[1] *Analogy*, pp. 281-4.
[2] *The Procedure, Extent, and Limits of the Human Understanding*, pp. 457-9.

conditions and characteristics of human knowledge, and I maintain that none of these interposes a barrier to the knowledge of the Infinite Being. I hold that the mind is conscious of its relation to the Infinite One, and in testimony of this it is beyond dispute that the emotions of our nature, operating according to their own laws, find special exercise in connexion with this recognised relation. The Deity, being thus in conscious relation with the mind, is immediately known by a primary and native cognition, which is the essential accompaniment of our necessary belief in the Divine existence, and He is mediately known through His works; while these two forms of knowledge, immediate and mediate, respectively unfold and expand together, and invariably harmonize according to their nature and degree. By the nature of the human mind, the knowledge we have, while clear and distinct in the recognition of the Divine Being himself, and of those attributes of His nature which are revealed to us, is, in both of its forms, limited and indefinite, and must ever continue to be so throughout our eternal existence, notwithstanding the continued advance we shall make. In our present condition there is much diversity of knowledge among different individuals, and the same person is capable of advancing from one degree of knowledge to another; but however much our primary cognition unfolds, and however far the study of the works of God be carried, whether in this world or the next, man's knowledge must ever continue limited and indefinite.

II. *Thought is the act of the mind in comparing the objects of knowledge.* The simple act of perception by

which we recognise an external object, such as a stone, is the act of knowing; but if the stone be compared with other objects around, or if the different properties of the stone be contrasted, such as its length, and its breadth, this is an exercise of *thought*. The consciousness of our own acts of mind, is knowledge; the comparison of different mental acts or states, is thought. All comparison of the objects of knowledge is thought. This is its widest definition, and with this before us it seems very obvious, that all objects known can be compared or contrasted. The materials of knowledge are all capable of being used by the understanding; whatever comes within the sphere of the one, may come within the province of the other.

Turning, then, to the application of this to the question before us, I hold that the Infinite One, being, as it seems to me, the object of knowledge, may also be the object of thought, and that there is nothing in the nature of thought which renders its exercise impossible in reference to the attributes of the Deity. But here we encounter the logical barrier, to which I referred in the opening of this chapter. Sir W. Hamilton has a short argument by which to dispose of all exercise of thought concerning the Infinite. "To think is to condition;" the Infinite is the Unconditioned; therefore, the Infinite cannot be the object of thought.[1] The grounds upon which I have maintained that the Infinite, while unlimited and all-perfect, is *not* the Unconditioned, have already been indicated. The Infinite Being is possessed of certain attributes and not of others, and the attributes

[1] See *Discussions*, p. 14.

He possesses are capable of being compared and contrasted with those from which they differ. But I shall endeavour now to show that there are no such conditions attaching to the exercise of thought as render it impossible to think concerning the Infinite. And for the purpose of clearing the way, it is necessary to consider first Sir W. Hamilton's dictum,—"To think is to condition." This is an incomplete and ambiguous proposition. It may mean either that "to think is to condition" *the objects of thought*, or to think is to put forth mental energy, according to the conditions of our own understanding. The latter is the only signification which the proposition can bear, with the least chance of vindication. Our thought does not "condition," or affect, the objects about which it is conversant. On the other hand, nothing can be more obvious than that our power of thought can find exercise, only in harmony with the conditions of our understanding. But of this truth Sir W. Hamilton's proposition is not only an incomplete, but an inaccurate, statement. If I may express a judgment, formed after much deliberation, I must say, with all deference to the memory of the revered and beloved philosopher, that the affirmation, "to think is to condition," is a proposition without meaning. "To condition" must mean *to impose conditions*, if it mean any thing, and our thinking imposes conditions on nothing. The whole truth in the matter is this, that thought is the exercise of the understanding according to its own conditions.

It is necessary still further to call attention to another peculiarity in Sir W. Hamilton's mode of ex-

pression, in dealing with this question. I refer to his peculiar use of the word "think." It cannot fail to strike the readers of his works that there is a uniform recurrence in them of the phrase "to think a thing;"[1] and, underneath this, lies the assumption of his theory. There is a fallacy lurking in the expression. We do not think a thing, but we *think of a thing.* That is to say, the thing is not embraced in our thought, but our thought is occupied upon the thing, or concerned with it. The tree, or the river, or the mountain *of which* we think, is not in the least affected by our thought concerning it; all that is involved in thought being, an exercise of our understanding *concerning* the qualities known by us to belong to the object. Knowing a particular mountain, we may compare it with some other mountain familiar to us, and pronounce it higher or lower than the other. The object of thought is identical with the object thought of, and the act of thought involves simply an operation within our own minds, which does not in any way affect the object, and which does not necessarily extend to all that belongs to the object, but may be concerned with only a particular quality of it. I hold, therefore, that it is inaccurate to say that we *think a thing;* and besides, that the expression contains a misrepresentation of the facts of consciousness, if it is intended to convey anything more than that we are conscious of thinking about an object. There may be very different degrees of thought *about* the same object, say a mountain; but even when our thought about it may be pronounced full or complete, we do not think the mountain. We do not

[1] *Logic*, I. p. 76, *et passim.*

think a man, however much we may think about him; and so we do not think the Infinite Being, however much we occupy our thought regarding Him. We do not think Infinity, since that were nothing else than to think infinitely; for infinity is not the quality of any object, but, as Dr. M'Cosh has said, it is only the measure or degree of a quality or attribute such as belongs to the Deity, and about which, I maintain, we are able to think. What these attributes are, is not matter of inquiry here, but all of them are infinite, and in so far as their existence comes within our knowledge, they may be the objects of thought. I therefore repudiate the expression that "we think a thing," as involving the assumption, which I deny, that to think is to embrace the object of thought, upon which assumption it is argued that the Infinite cannot be the object of thought.

This assumption may be traced through the whole of Hamilton's reasoning against the possibility of the Infinite being the object of thought. It is seen under its next aspect in these words, "Conditional limitation is the fundamental law of the possibility of thought."[1] This is the third parallel in Hamilton's philosophical trenching against what has been called, the Philosophy of the Unconditioned. They lie in this order:—"to think is to condition;" in thinking "we think the thing" itself; and now, "the fundamental law of the possibility of thought is conditional limitation." Now, this last proposition is as incomplete and ambiguous as the first. For the sake of definiteness, it may be stripped of the word "conditional," as all "limitation" must be condi-

[1] *Discussions*, p. 14.

tional, or caused by certain conditions belonging to, or connected with, the object limited. The word may be the more freely dropped at this point, as I have already stated in what sense it seems to me true, that to think is to condition. Hamilton's third position may, therefore, be viewed in the following aspect:—the fundamental law of the possibility of thought is *limitation.* The question immediately arises, *where* is this limitation? or, in other words, *to what* does it apply? Does it apply to our thought alone, or to the object alone, or to both? All are agreed that limitation is a condition of human thought; but I deny that the limitation of our thought imposes any limitation on the object, or implies any such limitation in it. Our thought, as I have shown, does not "condition" the object of thought; therefore, thought does not *impose* limitation on its object. Our thought, as I have shown, does not embrace the object of thought, nor does it necessarily involve co-extension with the object; therefore it does not necessarily *imply* the limitation of the object of thought. All that is involved, then, in Hamilton's "fundamental law" is, that limitation is an essential characteristic of human thought. The whole dispute, therefore, concerning the possibility of the object being unlimited, is left untouched by the conditions of thought; and the question must be decided as a matter of fact, whether an unlimited Being comes within the sphere of knowledge, and thereby becomes the object of thought.

Hamilton's three positions must be transformed into these:—thought is the exercise of the understanding according to its own conditions; thought does not imply

that "we think a thing,"[1] but that there is an "object *about which* we think;"[2] and limitation is an essential characteristic of thought, whatever be the object about which it is exercised. These three propositions do not involve the exclusion of the Infinite as an object of thought: they do not interpose any obstacle to the exercise of thought about the Infinite, as may appear still more clearly from a closer examination of the characteristics of thought.

In its simpler form, thought is the comparison of the qualities existing in the same object, or the comparison of different objects; in its higher form it is either the act of the mind, in comparing and gathering together the qualities belonging to an object, and thereby forming a conception of it; or the act of recognising the points of resemblance between individual objects, to the exclusion of their points of difference, and thus embracing the objects under a general notion. Every act of thought is thus a cognitive act under a special aspect. To think, is to acquire knowledge by comparison, and an act of comparison as really involves the attainment of knowledge, as an act of perception or self-consciousness. For philosophical purposes, however, we must distinguish that which is by comparison as an act of the *understanding;* and that which is by simple recognition as an act of *perception;* the one being an act of thought, and the other an act of knowledge: and the product of the one, a conception; of the other, knowledge. It is necessary, therefore, to inquire what are the characteristics of the mental effort by which, in the exercise of comparison, we rise to

[1] *Logic*, I. p. 76. [2] *Ibid.* p. 73.

a classified knowledge. Sir W. Hamilton says: "In an act of thinking, there are three things which we can discriminate in consciousness,—1*st*, There is the thinking subject, that is, the mind or *ego*, which exerts or manifests the thought; 2*d*, There is the object about which we think, which is called the matter of thought; and, 3*d*, There is a relation between subject and object of which we are conscious—a relation always manifested in some determinate mode or manner; this is the form of thought."[1] On these points there can be no dispute, save that thought, being an act of comparison, supposes at least two objects, as Hamilton afterwards expressly affirms, though, after the comparison of the qualities belonging to an individual, in course of which each quality is a distinct object, the individual distinguished by these qualities may be declared *the object of thought*. When, however, Hamilton says that "the distinctive peculiarity of thinking in general is, that it involves the cognition of one thing by the cognition of another,"[2] I am not prepared to admit it. The statement is true concerning the more complex form of thought, but, in my apprehension, it is not true of thought in its simpler form. If every act of comparison be an act of thinking, every act of comparison is not the cognition of one thing by another. If it be true, as I believe it is, that "when we think (of) a thing, this is done by conceiving (of) it as possessed of certain modes of being or qualities, and the sum of these qualities constitutes its concept or notion,"[3] then all thinking is not the cognition of one thing by another. "All thought is a comparison, a recognition of similarity

[1] *Logic*, I. p. 73. [2] *Ibid.* p. 75. [3] *Ibid.* p. 76.

or difference, a conjunction or disjunction; in other words, a synthesis or analysis of its objects;"[1] but in order "to think, to compare, to conjoin, or disjoin," it is not "*necessary* to recognise one thing *through or under another.*" If we contrast the qualities belonging to an individual object, we do not "recognise them through or under another;" but if we think of an object by embracing it under a "general notion," this is recognising it "through or under another," as when we consider an object not simply in regard to its individual characteristics, but as belonging to a certain species, such as river, mountain, body, or mind. When, for example, I observe the table before me simply as an object in existence within the sphere of my vision, this is knowledge acquired by an act of perception; when I contrast the length, breadth, and height of the object, this is a *simple* act of thought; when I close my eyes and think of the table, I do so *through* the *individual notion* which I have formed of it, by the combination of those impressions which its various qualities have made upon the mind; but, when I think of it under the *general notion,* to which the word *"table"* is attached as the symbol, I do so *through* that notion alone, which leaves out of account the characteristics distinguishing the object from others belonging to the same species. What I mean to insist upon here is, that there is a more simple and a more complex form of thought, and that thought may be engaged with an object which cannot be classified under a general notion. I maintain, that as we can know the Infinite Being, so He can be the object of thought. We are able to con-

[1] *Logic,* I. p. 13.

trast the different attributes which we know to belong to His nature, and are further able, by a higher exercise of thought, to combine in one conception our notions of the distinct attributes, though it is impossible that the Infinite One should be the object of such an exercise of thought, as that by which we classify different objects under a general notion.

There is not the slightest necessity for lingering to examine the use which Sir W. Hamilton makes of the statement that all thought is relative. Relativity applies to thought, as to knowledge; the argument by which the attempt is made to exclude the Infinite from both is the same; and the answer is the same. I must, therefore, refer the reader to the reply contained in the previous part of this chapter, as embracing those considerations on which a judgment is desired. Nor is there any need for illustration in detail of all those characteristics which belong to thought, in common with knowledge; such as, that thought implies the conscious relation of the mind with certain objects, that it involves a measure of recognition proportionate to the mental power possessed, and that such recognition, though always finite, may vary in degree. The application of these is sufficiently manifest to admit of exclusive reference here to those features of thought as such, which are most important in their bearing on the question at present engaging attention.

1*st*, *All the facts of knowledge are capable of being used as the materials of thought.* This is the law which regulates the objects of thought. The mind is capable of comparing everything which comes within the sphere of knowledge, and also within that of imagination, the

exercise of which involves simply new combinations of things known to exist, and introduces no new element of consideration in connexion with the present subject. All that is known affords materials for the exercise of thought. Whether the knowledge come through external perception or self-consciousness, whether it be mediate or immediate, whether it be *à priori* or *à posteriori* in its origin, all the facts recognised can be employed in the process of comparison by the understanding. It is, therefore, manifest that the whole contest concerning the question, whether the Infinite can be the object of knowledge, thought, or reasoning, must be waged at the first stage of the discussion. It is impossible for any one to show that some objects of knowledge are necessarily restricted from becoming objects of thought or of reasoning. If it be established, as I certainly believe it is, that the Infinite Being is the object of knowledge, the second position is impregnable, that the Deity is the object of thought. According to the knowledge which the mind possesses of His nature, must be our thought regarding Him. As, however, He is essentially distinct from all other beings, and above them all, there is plainly one exercise of thought which can have no application to the Deity, namely, that by which one object is classified with a multitude of others under a general notion. It is manifest from the very nature of the Infinite Being, that He cannot be thought under any higher or more general conception. But, as He is recognised by us as a Being of infinite power, wisdom, goodness, and holiness, we are able to compare these attributes together, to contrast them with such finite qualities as belong to man, and to gather

together our distinct conceptions of the several attributes into one notion, which we accept and maintain as our notion of the Deity. These are processes of thought not only possible, but actually prosecuted by most intelligent men, although there may be amongst such men a conception of distinct attributes more or less wide, and therefore a notion of the Infinite Being more or less extended in its degree and impressive in its influence upon the mind.

2*d*, *Thought may be definite or indefinite, according to the degrees of our knowledge of its objects.* Our *knowledge* becomes more complete according as we concentrate attention on the object, and thereafter our *thought* becomes more exact according as we exercise our power of comparison upon its qualities, or upon its relation to other objects. Thought must, therefore, take its character from the knowledge with which we start, though every exercise of thought, being a cognitive act, conducts the mind to a higher knowledge. According to our knowledge of the qualities of an object, is the comparison we are able to institute between them ; according to the comparison instituted, is the notion of the object which we carry away with us ; and according to the comparison of that notion and others already possessed, is the power to classify the object under some general notion. If, for example, a person discover a rare bird, his knowledge of it is determined by the attention he gives to its appearance ; his thought, by the comparison he makes of its qualities in their nature and relation to each other ; his notion, by retaining in unity the sum of conception resulting from the comparison of the various

qualities; and finally, his thought finds its ultimate exercise in classing the animal under the general notion "bird." It is thus manifest that our thought must be more or less complete, according to the knowledge we possess of the objects. If our knowledge be *definite*, our thought *may or may not* be definite; if our knowledge be *indefinite*, our thought *must* also be indefinite. Our knowledge of the Deity is *clear*, recognising Him as separate from all other beings, and above them all; it is *distinct*, recognising different attributes of His nature; but, it is *indefinite*, being necessarily inadequate in its degree; and so, in like manner, our thought concerning the Deity is clear and distinct, but indefinite.

Thought is indefinite when our comparison is inadequate. When sailing at some distance from the shore, objects may be seen both clearly and distinctly, so that we can distinguish them, and in some measure compare them, though it is impossible for us to institute a comparison which will be adequate. We may contrast the valley and the hill, the woody knoll and the projecting cliff, but we cannot fully compare the different qualities of the objects, or the exact relations of these objects. Yet, we may be conscious of a most impressive sense of the beauty of the whole, and carry away with us a clear and distinct notion of it, often to be recalled because of the pleasure it affords. This is a simple illustration of innumerable instances of indefinite thought, occurring continually in our experience, in complete antagonism to the theories of those who maintain that thought essentially involves that the object be embraced within definite boundaries, or exact logical forms. Thus Sir W. Hamil-

ton says, "That the mind only thinks (of) an object by separating it from others, that is, by marking it out or characterizing it; *and in so far as it does this, it encloses it within certain fixed limits*, that is, determines it. But if this discriminative act be expressed in words, I predicate the marks, notes, characters, or determinations of the thing; and if, again, these be comprehended in one total thought, they constitute its concept or notion."[1] In looking at this description of thought, it is necessary to keep distinctly in view that "separating an object from others;" "marking it out;" and "characterizing it," are purely mental operations which leave the objects unaffected. The separation is accomplished only mentally, that is, by *separating our thought* concerning a certain object from that regarding other objects known in relation with it. And so the "marking out," or "characterizing" an object is nothing else than our conception of the marks or characteristics known by us to belong to the object. This being true, any exercise of thought on our part leaves the object of thought uninfluenced by us, and I most unhesitatingly deny that in thinking of an object "by separating it from others, that is, by marking it out, or characterizing it," the mind necessarily "*encloses it within certain fixed limits.*" There are very many instances of the exercise of thought, in which the mind is conscious of utter inability to enclose the object "within certain fixed limits." In every such act of thought, the mind does "separate" the object from others, thus rendering our thought clear; it does "mark out" the characteristics of the object, thus rendering our thought distinct;

[1] *Logic*, I. p. 78.

but the mind is conscious of the impossibility of enclosing the object within certain boundaries. If our knowledge of an object be indefinite, our thought regarding it cannot be definite, else our thought must superinduce on our knowledge something which does not belong to it. Our thought, like our knowledge, must always, indeed, have certain recognised boundaries; but in thought, as in knowledge, we may be conscious that the object is not "enclosed" within the boundaries by which our intellectual effort is restricted. To be conscious of the limits of the act of conception is one thing, and to conceive of limits in the object, is quite another thing; but these two have not been sufficiently distinguished by Sir W. Hamilton. Any explanation of human thought is insufficient which fails to note the fact that the fixed limits of thought may not enclose the object of thought; in other words, that thought is not the measure of existence. All thought implies a conception of qualities belonging to an object, and any existence is an object of thought only in so far as its qualities are embraced within our conception, but thought does not necessarily involve a conception of the full *measure* of the qualities.

In multitudes of cases, I maintain, our thought is indefinite, involving a conception of qualities belonging to the object, but not of the measure of such qualities; that is to say, the mind, while forming a notion of the object, does not attain to the conception of its limits. Of such an indefinite form is our thought concerning the Infinite Being. As the mind in thinking does not necessarily enclose its object "within certain fixed limits," the Infinite Being is not excluded from the

objects of thought. As a Being known by us, He must be the object of thought to us ; and, our knowledge of Him is such that we are able to form a conception of His nature, both clear and distinct, using these words in the sense established by Leibnitz, though all our thought concerning Him must be indefinite.

In answer to such a view as that now advanced, that the Infinite is not excluded from the sphere of human thought, Hamilton maintains, in the most singular manner, that "we only deceive ourselves by substituting the *indefinite* for the Infinite, than which no two notions can be more opposed." In connexion with this must be taken the author's definition of the two terms here distinguished. He says, the Indefinite "is subjective," the Infinite "is objective;" the Indefinite "is in our thought," the Infinite "is in its own existence." It must be accepted as self-evident that the Indefinite is a characteristic of thought, while the Infinite is an attribute, or rather the measure of the attributes, of an object about which we think. This being admitted, it seems to me that it must be a most unaccountable mistake on the part of any one to affirm that he has a conception of the Infinite, merely because his thought is *indefinite*. It is surely very far from being a likely thing that any man, simply because he had an indefinite conception of a wide-stretching sea-shore, or of some great tempestuous ocean, would declare either of these objects infinite, mistaking the indefiniteness of his thought for infinitude in the object.

When, therefore, Hamilton maintains, that if in any instance we imagine that we obtain a conception of the

Infinite, "we only deceive ourselves by substituting the *indefinite* for the Infinite," I reply that it is just *because* they are distinct, that I maintain the possibility of a conception of the Infinite. I admit that our notion is indefinite, but it is an *indefinite conception* of an *infinite object.*

Dr. Mansel, as usual, follows Sir W. Hamilton, and repeats, in his own way, the same assertion. The statement occurs in connexion with the inadmissible hypothesis of a human attribute "magnified to infinity," which I have already criticised. If the assertion have any application at all, it must be to the Divine attributes. Dr. Mansel says, "We can conceive such attributes, at the utmost only *indefinitely;* that is to say, we may withdraw our thought, for the moment, from the fact of their being limited; but we cannot conceive them as *infinite,* that is to say, we cannot positively think of the absence of the limit."[1] I entirely concur with Dr. Mansel, when, in the sentence immediately preceding that quoted, he says concerning "human attributes," that "we cannot represent in thought any such attribute magnified to infinity," and since the magnifying process cannot be attempted otherwise than by an exercise of thought, it is altogether an impossibility, and there is no such thing as a human attribute "magnified to infinity." When, therefore, in the quotation just given, the author proceeds to tell how "we can conceive such attributes," his words must either apply to nothing, or to the Divine attributes. Either alternative may be accepted. If the former be taken, the necessity for criticism is removed;

[1] *Limits of Religious Thought,* p. 91.

if the latter be preferred, I hold the sentence to be a mixture of truth and error. Taking, then, the statement as applying to the Divine attributes, I agree with Dr. Mansel in saying, that "we can conceive such attributes at the utmost only *indefinitely;*" but his explanation of indefinite conception must be set aside as inapplicable. To say that we can conceive such attributes indefinitely, is not to say that "we may withdraw our thought for the moment from the fact of their being limited,"—the *fact* being, that they are *not* limited,—a fact which we both admit as resting on the authority of a fundamental belief placed within the mind. It is a very partial view of "indefinite thought" which represents it as a deliberate change in the form of thought, produced by an act of the will, withdrawing attention from the recognised limits of an object, and concentrating it on certain qualities without regard to their limits. According to this view *indefinite* thinking is a product of that which is definite, the indefiniteness being the result of a voluntary act of attention, which no sooner ceases, than the indefiniteness disappears, and the thought relapses into its original definiteness. Most of those interested in this discussion will be inclined to say that this is by no means what is most generally contemplated as indefinite thought. If indefiniteness of thought were in all cases the effect of a voluntary determination of the mind, we might be in some respects a happy race, with few perplexities and doubts; but we should certainly be a race more to be pitied, restricted to a low sphere, within narrow bounds, and shut out from the wider and nobler spheres in which thought may be clear and distinct,

though always indefinite, because of the nature of its objects. I am very far from denying that there are two senses in which thought may be indefinite, and that one of these is accurately described when it is represented as a voluntary concentration of attention on certain qualities of an object, to the neglect of the limits within which these qualities are restricted ; but much more frequently does the indefiniteness of our thinking spring from the nature of the object of thought, than from a voluntary determination of the mind. That is, in truth, pre-eminently and specifically, "indefinite thought," when the indefiniteness springs from the fact that the object of thought far outstretches our thinking power. I therefore maintain, against Dr. Mansel, that an indefinite conception is not obtained merely by "withdrawing our thought" from the recognised limits of an object. Nevertheless, the acknowledged ability which the mind has of forming a conception of an object without embracing its limits, demonstrates the fact that the recognition of limits is not necessary for the exercise of thought, and shows that an unlimited object is not excluded from the province of thought. Having, therefore, maintained that the Infinite Being is the object of faith, and knowledge, and now of thought, it is very evident that thought concerning such a Being, though necessarily indefinite, must be something altogether different from that indefiniteness which may characterize our thought concerning any limited object which we have seen. While conscious of the limits of our conception, that conception does not embrace limits in the object, and this remains true however much our conception of the Deity may be enlarged.

Our belief in the Deity is belief in an Infinite Being, and our conception is in harmony with that belief, for while it is necessarily indefinite, it is a conception of the Infinite One. The greater part of Dr. Mansel's statement must, as it seems to me, be entirely reversed, the truth being, that while we conceive of the Divine attributes only *indefinitely*, we conceive of them as *infinite*, that is, we positively think of the absence of any limit.

3*d*, *All thought is positive.* Thought is nothing else than the comparison of objects known; and as knowledge is always positive, so also must our thought be. All knowledge implies an object known; and so, in like manner, all thought involves an object about which we think, and must, therefore, be positive, that is, must embrace within itself the conception of certain qualities as belonging to the object. This may seem little more than a mere truism to those unacquainted with the discussion concerning the Absolute and Infinite; nevertheless, it has been most strenuously denied. In laying down the above proposition, I am once more brought into complete antagonism with Sir W. Hamilton and Dr. Mansel. While they deny the possibility of any positive knowledge or conception of the Infinite Being, they do not mean to deny the existence of certain facts of consciousness which point to an Infinite Being, and which have a certain application to His nature and His relation to us; but all these facts of consciousness are transferred by them to the region of what is called "negative thought." I apprehend that Hamilton did not intend to maintain that the mind had no recognition of the existence and attributes of the Deity; or, in other words, that there are

no facts in consciousness whose presence there is traceable to the recognition of an Infinite Being. There are, indeed, in his writings certain extreme and very extraordinary statements, which, if taken by themselves, might seem to warrant the conclusion that Hamilton held, that the human mind was incapable of discovering any traces of the Divine glory, or possessing any recognition of the Deity. But this was not the case. I consider that there are certain facts in consciousness, springing from a recognised relation between ourselves and the Infinite Being, which are accepted as facts by those who oppose each other on the question concerning a positive knowledge of the Infinite, and that Hamilton has attempted to include these facts within "negative thought." There is common ground between us as to certain mental facts, even though it be true that those who vindicate a positive knowledge and conception of the Infinite, plead for the presence of certain facts denied by their opponents. So undoubted is the existence of such common ground, that I am satisfied that if Hamilton had been convinced that thought could not exist in a "negative" form, he would not have been found denying all knowledge of the Infinite, but would have asserted a positive recognition of His existence and attributes. Every word of this declaration concerning Hamilton, admits of application to his distinguished vindicator, Dr. Mansel. "Negative thought" is a region of the same extent and significance in the writings of both. Were Dr. Mansel dislodged from that, I imagine that his whole philosophy, so full of reverence in thought and in language, would lead him to take a place among those who hold not only a necessary belief,

but also a positive conception of the Infinite Being. He has vindicated Hamilton with a profound ability and earnestness which must lead every admirer of the deceased philosopher, whether agreeing with his doctrine of the Unconditioned or not, to feel that a share of the admiration cherished for Hamilton himself, is to be extended to the author of the *Limits of Religious Thought*. This feeling I have a satisfaction in recording as my own, even while, in the same sentence, I must declare that Dr. Mansel's defence seems to me unsuccessful, and that I am constrained to attempt another blow at a system deemed philosophically false, and dangerous in its influence. The province of "negative thought" is a region very vaguely defined, and its characteristics have been described with no little vacillation; but I would adventure an examination of the mist-clad territory, and make an attempt to show that all that is real within it is actually enclosed by the boundaries of positive thought.

An inquiry into the defence which can be made of what has been called "negative thinking," makes it necessary to glance back upon the connexion between knowledge and thought. If thought be the comparison which the understanding institutes between different materials of knowledge, the possibility of negative thought must depend upon the existence of certain negative elements of knowledge, such as "negative attributes" in an object perceived, or in certain mental facts within our consciousness. Hamilton has not, so far as I remember, attempted to trace this connexion between the materials of knowledge and the form of negative thought; Mansel has tried it, and in doing so, has insisted upon the "distinction between what are vaguely enough termed *posi-*

tive and *negative ideas.*"[1] Certainly the designation is vague enough to admit of needless dispute. I have shunned the use of the word "idea," as a treacherous symbol, which has been employed in so many ways that it is scarcely serviceable in any case where exact discrimination of the mental phenomena is necessary. Dr. Mansel generally avoids it, but it finds a place occasionally; and in his *Prolegomena Logica*, from which I am now quoting, he says, "As it is sometimes convenient to have a general term, indifferently applicable to any object of internal consciousness, I have in the present work occasionally availed myself in this extent of the term *idea*, rejecting, however, the representative idea of perception."[2] There can be no doubt of the value of such a general term as that described, but to use the expression *idea* in a sense so wide, when engaged in the consideration of "negative thinking," is to complicate what should have been kept simple and distinct. The question to be considered is really this, Is there any such thing as negative knowledge, and are we able to rise from that to a negative concept? Does our power of knowledge present to us, at times, negative materials, from which we can rise to a negative act of conception or thought?

Treating of the distinction between "positive and negative ideas," Dr. Mansel makes the following statement: "A *positive intuition* is one which has been presented to us in actual consciousness, real or imaginary: a *positive concept* is one whose component parts are capable of being so present in combination. A *negative concept*, on the other hand, *which is, in fact, no concept at*

[1] *Prolegomena Logica*, p. 45. [2] *Ibid.* p. 33.

all, is the attempt to realize in thought those combinations of attributes of which no corresponding intuition is possible."[1] We are here first told what is the positive element both in knowledge and in thought, and that in a manner in every way satisfactory; but, when the author comes to treat of the negative element, the twofold distribution is dropped, and we are told only of a negative *concept*, and even that "is in fact no concept at all." In contrast to the positive concept, there is set down a negative concept; but, in contrast to the positive intuition, the author could not venture to place anything. A negative intuition would have been a contradiction too glaring to pass, even with the saving clause that such an intuition was "in fact no intuition at all." Dr. Mansel had previously laid down the declaration that in every intuition "the object is immediately related to the conscious mind,"[2] "the subject and the object standing in present relation to each other."[3] Every one will accept the declaration; but it clearly shuts out the bare mention of such a thing as a *negative intuition*, and establishes the fact that in *knowledge* or experience, all must be positive. With what consistency any author can plead for negative *thought*, who admits that all knowledge is positive, may be matter for immediate inquiry.

Meanwhile, it is necessary to notice that Dr. Mansel is here "throwing some light" on the distinction between "*positive* and *negative ideas*." In immediate connexion with the foregoing couplet of positives and the solitary negative, this illustration is given: "A blind man may be said to have a *negative idea* of colour, when he attempts

[1] *Prolegomena Logica*, p. 45. [2] *Ibid.* p. 9. [3] *Ibid.* p. 10.

to supply the defects of his experience by analogy from other sensations; as in the case mentioned by Locke, of the man who supposed the colour of scarlet to resemble the sound of a trumpet."[1] Here the term *idea* is "vaguely enough" introduced, when the necessity of the discussion expressly requires the distinct statement that the example given is either that of a negative *intuition*, or a negative concept. But does Dr. Mansel really mean us to take seriously what Locke meant us to laugh at, when he spoke of the "studious blind man, who," as he quaintly says, "had mightily *beat* his head about visible objects," and "bragged one day that he now understood what scarlet signified"? It was certainly not without some result that the poor man "had mightily beat his head," when he thought that scarlet "was like the sound of a trumpet;" but is this really to be accepted as Dr. Mansel's view of the "negative idea" of scarlet? If so, I should fancy there may be some little difficulty in saying whether this is to be regarded as a negative *intuition* or a negative *concept*. If we be only contented to call it an *idea*, we may be saved from "mightily beating our head" about it, and escape under cover of a generality. Locke used the illustration to show that the blind man could get no idea of scarlet, Dr. Mansel uses it to show that he did obtain some idea. Locke used it to prove that "simple ideas are only to be got by those impressions objects themselves make on our minds, *by the proper inlets appointed to each sort;*"[2] Dr. Mansel takes it to prove that a man who has no positive intuition, "may be said to have a negative idea of colour, when he at-

[1] *Prolegomena Logica*, p. 45. [2] *Essay*, B. III. ch. 4, sect. 11.

tempts to supply the defects of his experience by analogy from other sensations." I hold Locke's position to be the only tenable one. Dr. Mansel's statement requires the defence of these three propositions :—that a man may have an "idea" of colour, who has no knowledge of it by experience ; that a man has only to transfer his sensation of sound to another quality altogether unknown, in order to have a "negative idea" of the unknown quality ; and that a man may discover an analogy between a known quality and a quality unknown ; and these three propositions I hold to be indefensible. The blind man has the sensation of sound, and he transfers that sensation as also applicable to the word "colour," so that he has in his vocabulary two words as the symbolic representatives of one sensation. But, in doing this, he only accepts another word to represent the same sensation, and there is nothing else in his mind than the positive sensation of sound. If the "studious blind man" was in the habit of hearing a military band perform, and was told that the performers were dressed in scarlet uniform, it is easy to see how in his mind there would be an *association* between the sound of a trumpet and the word *scarlet ;* but it was altogether impossible that he could trace any *analogy* between his sensation in hearing the sound of the trumpet, and the colour of scarlet. When, therefore, Dr. Mansel, extending from this illustration, says, "If I have never seen objects of any other colour than white and red, I have a positive idea of these, a negative idea of blue and yellow," the truth is simply this, that I have a "positive idea" of white and red, but *no* "*idea*" *whatever* of blue and yellow. This "negative idea" is,

in fact, no "idea" at all, and the phrase is fictitious, standing as a symbol for nothing. A negative act of knowledge is an act of negative knowledge, and that is no act, and no knowledge, but a negation of knowledge. This, then, is certain, that all knowledge is positive; and this is nothing else than the truism, that all knowledge is a knowledge of something.

Having thus determined that all knowledge is positive, the positive nature of all thought follows by necessity. The understanding can be exercised only on objects known; in other words, our power of thought can be occupied only with the materials of our knowledge. Objects unknown cannot be the objects of thought, but all the facts in our cognitive experience may be the objects of thought. In this way it is manifest that all thought must be positive. As Sir W. Hamilton has said, "In an act of thinking there are three things which we can discriminate in consciousness: there is the thinking subject; there is the object about which we think; and there is a relation between subject and object of which we are conscious." These three there must be in every act of thought, and this is only to say, in other terms, that all thought is positive. Overlooking meanwhile Hamilton's peculiar use of the term *think*, which has already been made subject of remark, nothing could be more explicit than the statement, that "thought can only be realized by thinking something; that this something, as it is thought, must be thought as existing; and that we can think a thing as existing only by thinking it as existing in this, that, and the other determinate manner of existence, and that whenever we

cease to think something, something existing, something existing in a determinate manner of existence, we cease to think at all."[1] Nothing more explicit than this could be wished, as a statement of what is necessarily involved in an act of thought, and with this statement every one will agree.

Notwithstanding this, however, both Sir W. Hamilton and Dr. Mansel speak of "negative thought," and make very frequent reference to it throughout the entire discussion concerning the Infinite. By both of these authors the most conflicting declarations are made regarding what is called "negative thinking." On the one hand, it is the "negation of thought;" and, on the other hand, we are warned against supposing that it is a "negation of all mental activity." Both authors have shown the same desire to give a prominent place in their writings to "negative thinking;" both agree in declaring that this negative thinking is a "negation of thought;" that the "negative concept" is, "in fact, no concept at all;" and yet both have maintained, with equal earnestness, that it is not to be confounded with "the absence of all mental activity." I hold that "we cease to think at all," unless the understanding be occupied with known facts; that all that has been written regarding "negative thinking" finds no vindication whatever from an analysis of our mental operations; and that the prominence given to this fictitious symbol has done nothing more than perplex our inquiries.

How either Sir W. Hamilton or Dr. Mansel could vindicate "negative thinking," in consistency with the

[1] *Logic*, I. p. 76.

exposition they have given of the nature of thought, I cannot understand. It seems to me that by the clearest and most accurate statements concerning the essential characteristics of thought, they have manifestly shut out the contradictory thing called "negative thought."

Nevertheless, Hamilton has maintained that negative conceptions are as numerous as those conceptions which are positive; that, in fact, they go in pairs—the positive and negative always being linked together, so that they cannot be separated any more than a man can escape from his shadow when the sun shines. He says, "Every positive notion (the concept of a thing by what it is) suggests a negative notion (the concept of a thing by what it is not)."[1] A negative notion is a concept of a thing by what it is not! A rare concept this! How is it possible to form a concept of a thing by thinking of what it is not? We may indeed secure increased distinctness for a positive concept by contrasting it with different concepts, but there is nothing negative in such an exercise of mind, while we observe that certain qualities recognised in other concepts are not embraced in this. But "a concept of a thing by what it is not" is as great an inconsistency as can be imagined. Take Hamilton's definition of a concept, and apply it to this singular description of a peculiar member of the species. He says: "When we think a thing, this is done by conceiving it as possessed of certain modes of being or qualities, and *the sum of these qualities constitutes its concept or notion.*"[2] Where, then, is the "negative concept?" It has vanished like a Will o-'the-wisp in the

[1] *Discussions*, p. 28. [2] *Logic*, I. p. 76.

mist-land of negations. "When we perform an act of negative thought, this is done by *thinking something* as *not existing* in this or that determinate mode."[1] Thinking something as not existing in this or that determinate mode! Well, let that pass, and what then? "And when we think it as existing in no determinate mode, we *cease to think at all; it becomes a nothing.*"[2] What kind of rebuke any one would have received from Hamilton who ventured to speak of a "something" becoming "a nothing," is pretty well known;[3] but when a feat of negative thinking is to be illustrated, a little "word-juggling" is allowable.

Does any one imagine that with this declaration, that "when we perform an act of negative thought," "we cease to think at all," the illustration of "negative concepts" has ended? Not at all. Hamilton maintains, in connexion with this, that there are certain correlatives *in the mind*, the one of which is a *positive notion*, and the other "an abstraction of thought itself." I shall present the passage before quoted, in its connexion with this additional and wider view of the matter. He says, "Correlatives certainly suggest each other, but correlatives may, or may not, be equally real and positive. . . . Every positive notion (the concept of a thing by what it is) suggests a negative notion (the concept of a thing by what it is not); and the highest positive notion, the notion of the conceivable, is not without its corresponding notion of the inconceivable. But, though these mutually suggest each other, the positive alone is real; the negative is only an abstraction of the other, and in

[1] *Logic*, i. 76. [2] *Ibid.* [3] See *Discussions*, p. 610.

the highest generality even an abstraction of thought itself."[1] How Sir W. Hamilton has overturned his own declaration on this matter may appear by simply presenting another quotation. He says: "The conception of one term of a relation *necessarily* implies that of the other; it being the very nature of a relative to be thinkable, only through the conjunct thought of its correlative. For a relation is, in truth, a thought one and indivisible; and while the thinking a relation *necessarily involves the thought of its two terms*, so it is, with equal necessity, itself involved in the thought of either."[2] The alternatives which remain are manifest. The "negative concept," said to be a correlative of the positive concept, has either no existence, or it is a positive concept under a false name. Either way, we are rid of the discussion concerning "negative thought."

Dr. Mansel presents the same course of declarations concerning "negative thinking" that Hamilton had done, and the same criticism applies. If, as he says, "a negative concept is in fact no concept at all," let us agree to admit this, and then proceed to the discussion of something more positive. When he says that "thought is *only* operative within the field of *possible experience, i.e.*, upon such objects as can be presented in an actual intuition, or represented in an imaginary one," let us agree in the admission of it, as I most heartily do, and then it must also be admitted that there are no "negative ideas"[3] in the field, as forces for him to rely upon, or for me to contend against, and no chance of defending

[1] See *Discussions*, p. 28.
[2] Reid's *Works, Sup. Dissert.*, p. 911.
[3] *Prolegomena Logica*, p. 23.

such a fanciful thing as that fictitiously called "negative thinking."

There is, however, no consistency in first defining "thought," as Dr. Mansel has done, and then discoursing on "a class of *notions* which may be distinguished as *essentially or absolutely negative*,"[1] each one of which "is in fact no concept at all,"[2] and then finishing with the declaration that "such negative notions must not be confounded with the absence of all mental activity. *They imply at once an attempt to think, and a failure in that attempt.*"[3] I do not for a moment deny that we may attempt to think, and fail in that attempt, as when we try to obtain an adequate conception of the relation of objects which we cannot adequately compare, or strive to carry forward our thought till we find ourselves restrained by the essential limits of our understanding. But "thought is only operative within the field of possible experience," and must admit of being verified by application to some individual existence. "Negative notions" imply "an attempt to think!" An attempt to think *about what?* It must be about some object, and that a known object, else there can be no attempt to think, and once more the defence of "negative notions" is overturned. If, in order to think, it is necessary to have "an object about which we think," we can only "attempt to think," by having some recognised object about which we make the attempt. To try to think without having an object before the mind is as impossible as to think without having anything about which to think. All that is within the sphere of knowledge

[1] *Prolegomena Logica*, p. 48. [2] *Ibid.* p. 45. [3] *Ibid.* p. 48.

may be made the object of thought, and it is impossible for us even to make an effort to exercise our understanding without having something before the mind upon which our thought may be engaged. If an object be not within the sphere of our knowledge, there can be no such thing as attempting to think about it, but if it be really among the objects of experience it may be made the object of thought at pleasure. But to have no object before the mind, yet attempt to think, and fail in that attempt, is a mental impossibility.

Inconsistent as is the description given of "negative thinking," it is to this alone that Sir W. Hamilton and Dr. Mansel refer, as all that is within the reach of the human mind in seeking to form a notion of the Infinite Being. They affirm that we can have no positive conception of such a Being, but can only attempt to think about Him, and fail in the attempt. We can think of Him "only by the thinking away of every character" which can be conceived, and of course we must fail in *that* attempt; we can form only a "negative concept," "which," we are told, "is in fact no concept at all;" we can form only a "negative notion," which, we are informed, "is only the negation of a notion." This is, to my mind, the most lamentable result which the philosophical inquiry and speculation of the present century has produced. If it be the reaction from the daring speculation of the German philosophy, we are paying a fearful price for the philosophical excesses of Schelling and his followers. If the philosophy which maintains only a "negative notion" of the Infinite Being, and denies that anything more is possible,

find acceptance among the thinking men of our country, I cannot hesitate to avow the conviction that a heavy blow is struck against philosophy and theology too. But I believe that the majority of those who study this matter will repudiate entirely what has been called "negative thinking," as inconsistent with the facts of a sound philosophy, and will set aside the lengthened discussion in its support as an obstruction to patient inquiry. No one will deny that what is "impossible to thought," may be quite possible in existence, but it cannot be admitted that "the impossible to thought" is to be designated, a form of thought under which certain facts of consciousness are to be embraced.

The bearing of the question concerning "negative thinking" on the discussion regarding the Infinite, is made sufficiently plain from Sir W. Hamilton's lectures: —"Now here it may be asked, how have we then the word *Infinite?* How have we *the notion* which this word expresses? The answer to this question is contained in the distinction of positive and negative thought. We have a positive concept of a thing when we think it by the qualities of which it is the complement. But as the attribution of qualities is an affirmation, as affirmation and negation are relatives, and as relatives *are known only in and through each other*, we cannot, therefore, have a *consciousness* of the affirmation of any quality, *without having at the same time the correlative consciousness of its negation.* Now the one consciousness is a positive, the other consciousness is a negative, notion. But, in point of fact, a negative notion is only the negation of a notion; we think only by the attri-

bution of certain qualities, and the negation of these qualities and of this attribution, is simply, in so far, a denial of our thinking at all. As affirmation always suggests negation, every positive notion must likewise suggest a negative notion; and as language is the reflex of thought, the positive and negative notions are expressed by positive and negative names. Thus it is with the Infinite. *The finite is the only object of real or positive thought*, it is that alone which we think by the attribution of determinate characters; the Infinite, on the contrary, is conceived only by the thinking away of every character by which the finite was conceived; in other words, we conceive it only as inconceivable."[1] This passage may be taken as a full statement of the "negative" theory, and, I must add with all deference, it contains a fair specimen of the contradictions and inconsistencies which must cleave to a statement attempting to describe what is admitted to be "nothing." The central doctrine of Sir W. Hamilton, as it has been accepted and applied by Dr. Mansel, is before the reader in these unqualified terms:—"The finite is the only object of real or positive thought." In this way the Infinite is completely shut out from the sphere of human thought. The result of the theory is this, that neither knowledge, nor thought, nor reasoning bear any testimony to the existence of an Infinite Being, and though *faith* assures us beyond all doubt that such a Being does exist, we can neither know, think, nor reason in the least degree concerning His existence. To our *faith* He is the supreme object in existence; to our *intelligence*

[1] *Logic*, I. p. 102.

He is "nothing;" and, according to this philosophy, faith and intelligence are necessarily and for ever divorced. Such a doctrine as this may have a short season of popularity, but the doctrine itself has no vitality in it, and must soon disappear.

But, whether the theory be right or wrong, if it be maintained that "the finite is the only object of real or positive thought," there remains nothing to be said concerning the Infinite, but the correlative statement, that it is not the object of thought at all. And yet Sir W. Hamilton, in the paragraph quoted, proceeds to inquire not only how we have the word *infinite*, but how we have "the *notion* which this word expresses." He who says we can have no such notion, asks the question how we have it. And in attempting to explain the use of the *term* "infinite," he does not trace its appearance in language to our *faith* in the existence of an Infinite Being,—a faith which he admits to be an essential part of our mental constitution,—but actually refers it to the exercise of thought, which, he says, has nothing to do with the infinite. We are told that "relatives are known only in and through each other;" that is to say, that such relatives as *finite* and *infinite* are known necessarily in the same act of thought, and that the knowledge of the one is as necessary as the knowledge of the other. To make it manifest that the positive exercise of mind embraces both elements in the relation, it is said that we cannot have a "*consciousness*" of the one, without "the correlative *consciousness*" of the other. The one "consciousness" is then declared a "*positive* notion," and the other "consciousness" a "negative notion," on what

ground is not very obvious when both are "consciousness;" but the whole is ended at once by the declaration that "a negative notion is only the negation of a notion," and "is simply, in so far, a denial of our thinking at all." After stringing together a series of contradictions, the branch is cut on which they hang.

The whole theory concerning "negative thinking," seems to me altogether false, both in itself and in its application to the Infinite. It seeks to classify among the facts of consciousness, and under a special name, what has no existence in consciousness. In so far as it refers to the Infinite, the theory points altogether in a wrong direction, in attempting to indicate the possible origin of a "notion" of infinity. Such a conception never could arise from a simple knowledge of the finite, and an effort to classify with the finite, its negation, verbally denominated the *in*finite. Thought in any form must be the exercise of the understanding on the materials of *knowledge*. Some knowledge, either *à priori*, or *à posteriori* in its origin, there must be, before the operation of thought is possible; if such knowledge exists, there may be the exercise of thought on the facts which it involves; and if such thought be possible concerning the Infinite, it is possible for us to reason legitimately from its results. Holding as I do, along with Hamilton and Dr. Mansel, a necessary *belief* in the Infinite Being, I hold, against them, as an essential accompaniment of this belief, a necessary *knowledge*, and from that I argue the possibility of legitimate thought and reasoning concerning the nature of the Infinite One.

When, therefore, Sir W. Hamilton says that "the

last and highest consecration of all true religion, must be an altar—'*Ἀγνώστῳ Θεῷ*—'*To the unknown and unknowable God*,'" I reject the statement with a thorough conviction of its falsehood, and abhorrence of its consequences, both to philosophy and theology. That a full knowledge of the transcendent glory of the Deity is now, and ever must be, completely beyond the reach of every created mind, I admit with the most thorough assent of understanding and awe of heart. But when Hamilton says that God is "unknown and unknowable," and Dr. Mansel says, that "religion is not a function of thought,"[1] I deny both assertions with the concentrated earnestness of my whole being. I prefer to feel some share of the emotion experienced by the Apostle Paul at Athens, when he witnessed that altar "to the unknown God," and felt his "spirit stirred within him," rather than to bow to the authority of the men, who now proclaim that altar "the last and highest consecration of all true religion." With all my admiration and esteem for the men of distinguished ability who, in our day, have attempted to vindicate this dogma on philosophical grounds, I cannot consider it as anything else but "philosophy falsely so called;" and, that religion which is "not a function of thought," I prefer to denominate "superstition" and not devotion.

When Sir W. Hamilton says,—"The Divinity, in a certain sense, is revealed; in a certain sense, is concealed: He is at once known and unknown," I perfectly agree with the statement. This I believe to be the actual truth in the case; but when he attempts to raise in our

[1] *Proleg. Logica*, p. 276.

land the old pagan altar, with the pagan inscription — *Ἀγνώστῳ Θεῷ*—and to write under it, the English rendering in this form, "To the unknown and unknowable God," and then proclaims this "the last and highest consecration of all true religion," I humbly think that he simply contradicts his preceding sentence, and engages in a very pagan act of consecration. If the Divinity be "in a certain sense revealed; in a certain sense concealed;" we can advance in our knowledge of that revelation, and the Deity can enlarge the revelation of Himself at pleasure. If God be "at once known and unknown," our knowledge is something positive, and capable of advancing still further into the glory of the unknown. I agree with Dr. M'Cosh when he says,— "They are in error who conclude that they cannot know an Infinite God, but they are equally in error who suppose that they can reach a perfect knowledge of Him. There is a sense in which He may be described as the unknown God, for no human intellect can come to know all the attributes of God, or even know all about any one of His perfections; but there is a sense in which He is emphatically the known God, inasmuch as He has been pleased to manifest and reveal Himself, and every human being is required to attain a clear and positive, though at the same time a necessarily inadequate knowledge of Him."[1]

After having entered carefully into an examination of the characteristics of knowledge and thought, it is unnecessary that I should spend much time, endeavouring to establish the fact that it is possible to *reason accurately*

[1] *Intuitions of the Mind*, p. 230.

concerning the nature of the Infinite God. Reasoning is the exercise of the understanding, by which truth is inferred from the facts of experience and the results of thought. All the facts which our knowledge contains, and all the products of our thinking, may be brought before the understanding and compared, for the purpose of discovering truth which does not lie immediately in view, but which may be inferred from what has already been discovered. If, then, it has been established that the Infinite Being is known to our mind, and is the object of thought, it follows inevitably that we can reason legitimately from our knowledge, and it is lawful for us to do so. Dr. Mansel's argument to the contrary, if it were valid, would, as it seems to me, not only restrict Philosophy, but involve the condemnation of Systematic Theology. The author of the *Limits of Religious Thought* may be prepared for this, but I suspect there will be few indeed ready to cast away our stores of Systematic Theology, as accumulated through a daring violation of the necessary laws of thought. Dr. Mansel's condemnation of all reasoning concerning the Infinite, is based entirely on the foundation that a knowledge of the Infinite is impossible, and if the foundation be overturned, as I apprehend has been done, the whole structure falls. Those who know the Infinite Being, and form a conception of His attributes which have been revealed, are able to consider the relation between things finite and the Infinite One, and infer with the greatest accuracy not a little truth concerning the nature and government of God, which has not been immediately revealed.

While Sir W. Hamilton and Dr. Mansel have so

strenuously maintained the doctrine concerning "negative thinking," and have referred to such "negative thought" as the only possible exercise of mind concerning the Infinite, I am very far from admitting that they have been at all successful in preserving consistency with their theory, throughout their writings. The very reverse of this is the case. I apprehend that there is little which would prove more difficult in connexion with this discussion than the attempt to reconcile their statements concerning the nature and attributes of God, and those concerning the powers and destiny of the human mind, with the theory of the impossibility of a knowledge of the Infinite. The theory does not rest on any very solid foundation, nor is it by any means a firm structure; but, it is pleasing to find two of the leading builders of it, most earnestly dealing out against it heavy blows, well fitted to bring about its complete destruction. Their efforts in this direction, by which benefit must be done to the cause of Philosophy, show the triumph of truth over the authority of a theory.

A single quotation, by way of illustration, may not be uninteresting, as showing what can be said regarding the Deity, by the upholders of a negative Philosophy. Sir W. Hamilton says, "God only exists for us as we have faculties capable of apprehending His existence, and of fulfilling His behests."[1] By what process can such a statement as this, which is only a specimen of many more, be brought to any apparent harmony with the theory which makes the Infinite negative of the conceivable itself? In the *Limits of Religious Thought*, a hun-

[1] *Lectures on Metaphysics*, I. p. 63.

dred such passages may be found. For example, Dr. Mansel says, "It is by *consciousness* alone that we know that God exists, or that we are able to offer Him any service. It is only by *conceiving* Him as a Conscious Being, that we can stand in any religious relation to Him at all."[1] Will our author maintain that "consciousness" is no knowledge; or will he assert that conceiving of God as a conscious Being is "in fact no concept at all," and that we do not stand in "any religious relation to Him at all"? Another brief quotation may be given, where examples are so numerous: "'Know thyself,' was the exhortation of the Christian Teacher to his disciple, adding, 'if any man know himself, he will also know God.' He will at least be content *to know so much of God's nature* as God himself had been pleased to reveal."[2] Had any other author written these words, Dr. Mansel would have replied that "*to know so much* of God's nature" is to possess a "partial knowledge," and a partial knowledge is a "*knowledge of a part*," whereas the Infinite is indivisible, therefore this is not a knowledge of God at all, or at least not a knowledge of an Infinite God, and surely no being is God who is not infinite.

But the special inconsistency to which I here refer on the part of both authors, is that they declare without the least hesitation that this impossibility of knowing the Infinite will not always continue in the history of the human mind. If the very nature of the human mind,—if the necessary laws of thought, render it impossible to know God, must not the nature of the mind continue what it is, and the laws of thought remain what they are?

[1] *Limits of Religious Thought*, p. 86. [2] *Ibid.* p. 266.

If it be true that the finite can have no knowledge of the Infinite, must we not for ever continue finite, and a knowledge of God be for ever impossible? This is a most manifest and necessary consequence of the theory, and he who is not prepared to assert the perpetual impossibility of a knowledge of the Infinite Being, overturns the Hamiltonian theory, which Hamilton does himself.

Hear Sir W. Hamilton declare what the Scriptures teach concerning *a future life*, and implicitly accept that teaching. "The Scriptures explicitly declare that the Infinite is for us now incognisable; they declare that the finite, and the finite alone, is within our reach. It is said (to cite one text out of many), that 'now I know in part' (*i. e.*, the *finite*); (!) 'but *then*' (*i. e.*, in the life to come) 'shall I know even as I am known' (*i. e.*, *without limitation*)!" As an example of Scripture exposition, this passage may call for consideration hereafter, but it is adduced now as an indication of the consciousness of the utter insufficiency of the Negative Philosophy to account for what the Scriptures clearly indicate as the measure of knowledge awaiting us in a higher world. It is to the honour of Sir W. Hamilton that he openly avowed his conviction that the teaching of Scripture implied that we should know the Infinite God in the world to come, although such an avowal is completely destructive of the theory he has maintained concerning the impossibility of a knowledge of the Infinite by a finite mind. That the Scriptures declare that we shall know God in the world to come, and that more fully than He can be known by us now, no one can deny who has studied them; but how Sir W. Hamilton came to

affirm that we should there possess a knowledge "without limitation," I cannot understand. Either the finite mind is capable of infinite thought, which Hamilton expressly denied ; or we shall ourselves become infinite ; or there has been a misinterpretation of Scripture, as I believe there is, in the rendering given of both clauses of the verse quoted. But this at least is admitted, that in another state, we shall have a clear positive knowledge of the Infinite Being, and if so, the theory is overturned which declares such knowledge impossible for a finite mind.

Dr. Mansel makes the same admission concerning the possibility of reaching a positive knowledge of the Divinity in another world, which he does to the complete overthrow of his whole theory. He says, "The time may indeed come, though not in this life, when these various manifestations of God, 'at sundry times and in divers manners,' may be seen to be but different sides and partial representations of one and the same Divine reality ; when the light which now gleams in restless flashes from the ruffled waters of the human soul, will settle into the steadfast image of God's face shining on its unbroken surface. But ere this shall be, that which is perfect must come, and that which is in part must be done away." This is truth beautifully presented ; but, if there be even now "light which gleams in restless flashes from the human soul," it is more than we have any account of in his philosophy. Besides, the reference to the "image of God's face shining on the unbroken surface of the soul," suggests the inquiry whether that image was not there in the soul of man in its original state, and if man was

not then a finite being, able to think only in accordance with the condition of relativity to which all thought is subject now? And is that image of God not in our soul yet, depraved as we are, and unable to think unless there be an object about which to think? Unless he be prepared to maintain that in the next world we shall be able in some way to think of the Deity, without being conscious of His *relation* to our mind as an object of thought, or that the Infinite Being may exist in such a *relation*, which is a direct contradiction of what he has written, he cannot plead for a knowledge of God even in the next world.

In another passage having the same application, it is said, "I believe that Scripture teaches, to each and all of us, the lesson which it was designed to teach, so long as we are men upon the earth, and not as the *angels* in heaven. I believe that 'now we *see* through a glass darkly,' in an enigma; but that *now* is one which encompasses the whole race of mankind, from the cradle to the grave, from the creation to the day of judgment: that dark enigma is one which no human wisdom can solve; which Reason is unable to penetrate; and which Faith can only rest content with here, in hope of a *clearer vision* to be granted hereafter." Passing the consideration that the hope of a "clearer vision"[1] hereafter implies the admission of *some vision* here, there is no one of the whole host of logical quibbles which Dr. Mansel has launched against the possibility of a knowledge of the Infinite Being now, which may not be launched with equal force, (and that is no force at all,) against the pos-

[1] *Limits of Religious Thought*, p. 263.

sibility of any vision of the Infinite One, since that *must* be a recognition of the Deity as distinguished from self, and therefore related. If the Infinite cannot exist in relation ; if the relation of a thinking mind, and an Infinite Being is an impossibility ; complete ignorance of the Deity must be the lot of our miserable race, not only "from the cradle to the grave," but from the cradle to eternity. If the *angels* know God, as Dr. Mansel implies, is their knowledge of such a kind that they are not conscious of their *relation* to the Infinite One ? If, as is maintained in the *Limits of Religious Thought*, men must "imagine that they can be *conscious without variety*, or *discern without differences*," before they "can attain to a rational knowledge of the Infinite God ;"[1] it must be for ever impossible to know the Deity. This dark theory I hold to be baseless in Philosophy, and destitute of a shadow of authority from Scripture. I hold that we have now a knowledge of the Infinite One ; that, with the aids of experience, we may advance greatly in the exercise of thought concerning His attributes and authority ; that in a higher state, with a purified nature, and a nobler revelation before us, we shall rise to a grander acquaintance with His glory ; and that throughout eternity, our knowledge shall be ever advancing and widening, but never complete.

[1] *Limits of Religious Thought*, p. 264.

CHAPTER VI.

TIME AND SPACE IN THEIR RELATION TO DISCUSSIONS CONCERNING THE INFINITE.

Speculations concerning Time and Space raise at once around us the succession of contradictions ingeniously suggested as involved in the correlatives, finite and infinite. The logical whole and part are brought into use, the process of "word-juggling" begins, and the ordinary series of experiments is repeated under the new name of "time and its parts." When this is completed, the same thing is once more produced under the denomination of "space and its parts." It is said we cannot conceive time beginning, and we cannot conceive it ending, yet we conceive of it as relatively limited, so that there may be finite times, while time itself is really infinite. Here is scope enough for logical subtlety. We look back upon the past and call it infinite, or say it stretches back to eternity, and yet that eternity is *bounded* by the present. We look into the future, and say there is an eternity to come, yet what we thus call eternity has a *beginning* in the present. It is easy to see that a multitude of curious problems may be produced from such materials as these, and it is quite essential for a full discussion of the subject that there be

some consideration of the relation which the discussions on time and space have to the question regarding our knowledge of the Infinite.

In the exercise of our mind there is the continual consciousness of a *succession* of mental states. Perception, reflection, thought, reminiscence, imagination, emotion, desire, volition, may follow each other in the most diversified order, and we are not only conscious of each act of mind as it arises, but also of the relation which the present act bears to those which preceded it. It is this consciousness of succession in our mental states which is really and in itself our consciousness of time, or what we are accustomed to call the succession of events *in* time. This recognition of time, therefore, involves an act of memory. If the mind were capable only of the consciousness of a present object, without any recollection of the objects previously engaging attention, or of the preceding exercise of its own power, there could be no consciousness of time. But, inasmuch as consciousness involves a change of mental states, and a very frequent change of the objects presented before the mind, it necessarily implies, in its continued exercise, the recognition of succession. In perceiving an object, for example, the act of perception is possible only as we are conscious of it, and consciousness is always of a *present* act. We are, moreover, conscious in entering upon any such exercise of mind, that we make a transition from a previous mental act which is still remembered by us. Each effort of mental energy is, therefore, recognised as standing in the relation of succession to some other which has preceded it. The recognition of time is thus

a constituent element in the operations of consciousness, and it is purely because of the recognised relation of our successive mental acts that the conception of time springs up within us.

While, however, this is true concerning the origin of the conception, it is further to be noticed that the mind in many cases observes a course of succession in the existence of external objects which are seen to pass through different phases of being. The mind not only perceives a relation of succession in the order in which objects are presented before its attention, or rather, in the order in which the attention is directed upon the objects, but oftentimes a relation between *events* affecting the existence of objects, external to itself. In the exercise of the understanding, memory, imagination, and other mental powers, the succession of which we are conscious, is purely in the mind. In so far, however, as we are conscious of it in the exercise of our cognitive power, as in perception or observation, it may be either exclusively in the mind, or both in the acts of observation and in the facts observed. In the latter case, succession in the external forms of existence is a matter of observation, quite distinct from that succession of which we are conscious in our mental operations. In so far as the mind is active, it is habitually conscious of succession in the different states through which it passes, and out of this truly springs its conception of time. In so far as the mind recognises a succession of external events, it applies its own conception of time to objective existence, as well as to the operations of its own powers. But such external succession is a matter of simple observa-

tion, and not by any means necessary for the exercise of the cognitive powers. There may be a succession of events in the external world contemporaneous with that which is passing in my mind, and capable of being measured from the standard of consciousness, but these may or may not be matters of observation, and my recognition of time springs essentially from the operations of consciousness itself.

Setting aside, then, the succession of events in the external world, as only occasionally engaging the attention, it is really in the operations of the mind that the continual consciousness of time is found. Every mental exercise implies it. In perceiving an object, for example, the act of perception is possible only as we are conscious of it in the mind, and its presence is for us the recognition of present time. So it is in every mental exercise, thereby revealing that this recognition of time is a constituent element in every act of consciousness. As the various objects, one after another, come up before the mind, each in its own order is known as *present*, and the recognition, by aid of memory, of the place which they hold in relation to each other, is the discovery of *succession* in our mental states, which makes the consciousness of time a necessary accompaniment of mental activity.

But, while it is true that we cannot perceive or think of an object, except in the relation of time or succession, it is equally true that we cannot be conscious of time except *in the relation of successive mental states.* That is to say, consciousness of succession is possible only in the consciousness of successive operations of the mind,

and consequently in connexion with distinct objects. We cannot be conscious of *pure time*, that is of time simply and in itself, and we have no knowledge of any such existence, notwithstanding the constant references made to it. Simple succession there cannot be, for all succession must consist of changes in the states of experience, or in the forms of existence. Knowledge of time, therefore, is nothing else than the consciousness of such changes. But inasmuch as subjection to such change is a universal necessity of the human mind, invariably recognised in consciousness, this succession in personal experience is distinguished by the name of time. As the result of what is esteemed a more careful analysis, I am constrained to abandon the position formerly maintained, and now hold that time is the designation given to our consciousness of continued succession in our mental states. I, therefore, speak exclusively of our *consciousness* of succession, and cannot retain the reference to a *conception* of time. For if conception be the gathering up into one notion of certain characteristics which may be attributed to a distinct existence, then I cannot plead for a conception of time. I do not find it possible to present before the mind any notion of pure time, which can be attributed to a distinct existence within the sphere of consciousness, or of external perception. The consciousness of the incessant changes in our mental states, is the true origin of our knowledge of time, or succession.

When, however, we look beyond the inner circle of mental experience upon the external world, we find that there is change or succession as real, as incessant, as regular, going on there, as there is in the current of

mental energy. The mind must acknowledge the reality of the outward succession, as implicitly as the reality of that which self-consciousness reveals. There are certain prominent marks of succession in outward existence, which cannot fail to arrest our attention, in the relation in which we stand to the world we inhabit, and which, as outward realities constantly patent to our observation, may be taken as measuring the course of what we call time, or succession. Such are the succession of light and darkness, which we call day and night, or the phases of the moon. It is easy to see that these things recognised by us as inhabitants of this world, may be no standard of succession to the inhabitants of other worlds, within whose observation they do not come. But they are realities in our experience, and as they apply to our whole world, and to men as its inhabitants, they may be very well taken, and fall naturally to be accepted, as measurements of succession common to all. They are really world-measurements of succession, and therefore suitable for universal use, notwithstanding the variations which they involve. The existence of the conscious inhabitants of the globe may be as accurately measured by these outward marks of succession recognised by them, as men may compute the existence of outward objects by the course of their own consciousness. The standard of measurement is equally accurate whether it be taken from the facts within, or the facts without, though the scale be different. The succession of events may be as truthfully computed by reference to the annual revolutions of the earth, the reign of sovereigns, facts in domestic history, or facts in self-consciousness ;

and men will apply all these, and many more besides, according to their convenience, though that which is open to universal observation must come to be the final standard of appeal. Wherever succession is, this is what we denominate time, and it may be computed according to the form of change recognised.

Besides our consciousness of *succession* in mental experience, and along with it, we have the consciousness of *continued personal existence* through all the changes in our mental states. This, as in the former case, involves the exercise of memory, but in a more extended degree. In this way, we have the consciousness of *duration* in existence, and as this is conscious duration *through* these changes, it is capable of being measured *by* the succession of changes. Further, as in looking out upon the external world, we recognise the continued existence of objects, during the variations of personal experience, or the successive changes going on in the world, we have thereby the knowledge of duration of external existence.

All that is involved in what we have been accustomed to denominate time, and which may be measured by various standards, is embraced in these two things,—succession in the forms of existence, and, continued existence through these changes. What we call time is the duration or continuance of changeable existence. If this be true, it began when changeable existence was originated by the Creator, and it continues, in its successive stages of measurement, as long as such existence is maintained by His will and power.

From these considerations it is manifest, that when

we say that the Infinite Being is not subject to the law of time, we say only in other terms that he is *unchangeable* in His existence. We say nothing whatever affecting the continuance of His existence, but only that He is necessarily all-perfect, and therefore cannot change. If, therefore, He is not subject to change, it is easy to understand how His continued duration is not in itself measured by successive epochs. Where there is no succession in the forms of life, there is necessarily in that existence no stages by which to reckon continuance in being. We compute the duration of our life by the changes through which we pass in experience, external or internal; and we can see plainly enough that without change there could be no computation. It is thus unmistakably clear that *in the being* of God there is nothing by which to estimate duration of existence. And yet it is no less certain, that, since we and the changeable universe to which we belong, exist in relation with the all-perfect God, and in subjection to Him, we can truthfully, for our own guidance, estimate His continued existence, by the different stages of our own duration, or of the duration of His works. And this measurement of Divine existence, is not merely truth *relatively to us*, as some would have us admit, but actually true in the existence of God. It is as true that the great Deity exists in relation with us, as that we exist in relation with Him; and therefore it is true that our existence is thus far, and in its own manner, a measurement of the continued and unchangeable existence of God. The most ardent defenders of the "imbecility" of the human mind in its application to such questions as this, will find consider-

able difficulty in any attempt, to show where there can be mistake in computing the continued existence of the Deity from the first exercise of creative power till the day we live.

I have endeavoured briefly to sketch what seems to me the true doctrine concerning Time, and now it is necessary to consider what use has been made of the fact that the human mind is subject to what has been called the *condition* of Time. Merely to name that word "condition," is to warn us that we are again in the neighbourhood of an old snare, and doomed to go through the same course of logical fencing we have gone through often enough already. Time itself "is only a form of the conditioned!" Ah, yes! Here we are, stopped once more with a dead wall right across the path. The old syllogism is again fixed up in a new place. Time is "only a form of the *conditioned;*" the mind is necessarily subject to this *condition;* therefore, the mind cannot know or conceive the *unconditioned.* Very conclusive this may be in form, but very inconclusive in argument.

It is of little consequence whether we say that Time is a *condition* or a *law* of mind, since either expression indicates a fact, which, I suppose, is universally acknowledged. But it is of the utmost importance for the discovery of the truth, that we seek a fair statement of the fact, and that there be placed alongside of it, a simple statement of what is thought to be the nature of the Divine excellence, as superior to the law of Time. When, then, we say that the human mind is subject to the law or condition of Time, the fact which is thereby indicated

is simply this, that the operations of the mind necessarily imply the consciousness of a continued succession of mental states. This is admitted by all, and must be accepted as common ground by those who hold the most opposite views concerning its consequences. The fact concerning the perfection of the Deity is no less certain. When it is said that the Infinite Being is not subject to the law of Time, the fact thereby indicated is simply this, that in His existence there is no transition from one state to another; in other words, the Deity is essentially unchangeable. This also is a fact upon which both parties in the discussion are agreed. The question then arises, Does the constant succession of mental states, prevent the human mind from attaining any knowledge or conception of the Unchangeable God? Or, presented from the other point of view, Does the unchangeableness of the Deity necessarily prevent His being in the least degree the object of knowledge or of thought? That question I answer in the negative.

If we are to avoid the mere construction of logical forms, by the use of contradictory terms, such as the conditioned and the unconditioned, it is necessary, in answering such a question as that before us, to show what bearing this *condition* of mind has on the *object* of knowledge or thought. Separated from the special application in view, the question is really this, Does the mind *impose* on the object the condition of its own activity? or, must the mind *recognise* in every object a succession of different states, similar to that in its own consciousness, in order that the object may be known? To such a question, as it seems to me, there is but one answer possible,

and that completely adverse to the position of those who seek to establish that God must be unknown, because mind is subject to the law of Time. The mind does not impose its own conditions on the objects known ; it does not invariably recognise in objective existence, a succession analogous to that which exists in consciousness; and consequently the recognition of change in the object is a distinct matter of observation. Succession is certainly a law of things, as well as a law of thought ; and, as has been said, there are certain world-measurements of succession, by which the duration of all things in this world of change can be estimated. But it is worthy of notice just at this point, that matter is not subject to the law of succession in the same way as mind. Succession does not mean the same thing in reference to a stone, as in reference to a man, and consequently if the stone be the object of perception, the mind, in that act of knowledge, does not recognise in the object subjection to the same law, of the operation of which self-consciousness gives testimony. The truth is plainly this, that while the mind is uniformly conscious of succession, and cannot escape from it, it *may or may not recognise succession* in the object of knowledge. When I look upon a picture, I may be conscious of successive acts of attention in marking the details brought out on the canvas, and I may be conscious of a succession of pleasurable emotions, as I stand to contemplate the general result of the artist's skill ; but in all this the mind does not observe any change in the object, and does not by any means fall into the mistake of supposing that a course of successive forms of existence is passing in the object, analogous to

that which is experienced in the mind. While, then, the mind is uniformly conscious of succession in the exercise of its own powers, it does not invariably recognise succession in the forms of external existence, and it does not impose upon the object contemplated the changes which are distinctly recognised as belonging to its own states. If there be change in the external object, such change must be matter of separate observation, as quite distinct from the course of succession in self-consciousness. If there be no recognised change in the external object, the want of such change is no obstruction to a knowledge of the object.

The simple statement of these facts clears the way considerably, and enables us to turn somewhat more easily to the question, Whether the mind, on account of its subjection to the law of time, is or is not altogether precluded from a knowledge of the unchangeable God? The question, it will be observed, does not in this case refer in the least to the infinitude of the Divine nature, but exclusively to the unchangeableness of the Deity; in other words, to His essential superiority to the law of change, otherwise called, the law of time. Now, from what has been said above, it is apparent that, while the mind is essentially and invariably subject to change, it is altogether immaterial to the exercise of its cognitive power, whether the object contemplated be recognised as passing through successive forms of mutation. If this be so, the unchangeableness of the Divine nature is not in itself a hindrance to the exercise of our cognitive power. The logical barrier raised at this point in connexion with mental subjection to the law of time falls to

the ground, leaving the way clear, and there is no need for lingering to examine the fragments.

If, then, the condition of time or succession to which the mind is subject, does not present an obstruction to knowledge concerning the Infinite Being, it is necessary to prosecute our inquiry further for the purpose of discovering what bearing the facts concerning Time, as a law of mind and of matter, may have on the general subject here under consideration. I have already spoken of time as the *succession* of different states in the same existence, and, besides, of the *duration* of that existence through all these forms of change. These two, succession as to state, and duration as to existence, raise a multitude of most interesting and important questions concerning the relation subsisting between the changeable and the unchangeable. Here comes into view the fact that duration *in* time, or *through* a course of successive stages, is capable of being divided, in the experience of a conscious subject, into past, present, and future.

Since time is only the succession of changes or events, it is manifest that there can be a *measurement* of time from any point, and in any proportions. And as there are certain regular courses of succession palpable to all, these afford the best standards of computation, inasmuch as they are capable of universal application. What we have called our *divisions of time* have been nothing else than the notation of *events* occurring in regular succession, such as the darkness and the light; the relative positions of the sun in the heavens; the revolutions of the moon; the revolutions of the earth round the sun;

or, rising to a view perhaps more philosophical though not equally exact, we have reckoned by epochs, dating from great events in the history of our race. These divisions of time are nothing more than a classification of events according to their succession.

From the very nature of time, it is next to be observed as self-evident, that the continued course of change in which it consists can be only in one direction, being necessarily by *succession*. There can be no such thing as a "regress process," of which we have heard not a little, and by the false admission of which, logical acumen has found some needless exercise. If the succession of events constitutes what we denominate time, there have been events which are past; there are events now occurring; and, by a natural principle of mind, we believe that these events will still be followed by others. Time is, therefore, naturally divided into past, present, and future.

Inasmuch as time is recognised by us in the successive states of self-consciousness, the *present is the only actual time*. We can never by any possibility recede in consciousness into the past, that is, exist in past time; nor advance in consciousness into the future, that is, exist in future time; for we exist only as we are conscious, and consciousness is only of the present. The present is, therefore, the only reality.

There are, however, certain experiments in which the mind, possessing the powers it does, has a tendency to indulge, in connexion with the succession of events. Gifted with the power of memory, by which it can recall the past: and with the power of imagination, by which it can represent in consciousness facts previously ob-

served, or entirely new combinations of events, the mind inclines to make excursions for itself, out of the sphere of the present and actual. While bound essentially to the present, beyond which it is impossible to pass at any moment, it can advance through a succession of states applying either to the past or to the future. When these apply to the past, there may be either a combined exercise of memory and imagination, or purely of imagination. When they apply to the future, it is the imagination exclusively which finds exercise. While actually advancing by a course of succession in consciousness, the imagination may go back upon the past, tracing in a regressive order a course of supposed events. This is wholly an exercise of imagination, which terminates only by an exercise of will, or by necessity, under the conscious inability to trace a connected chain further. If we seek an explanation of the vast line of events which must have preceded what consciousness reveals in the present, our *natural belief* arises to bear testimony to the existence of the unchangeable Originator of all finite being, and who is "from everlasting to everlasting." Does the mind, then, rest contented with the simple deliverance of faith concerning the origin of finite and changeable existence, which is the declaration of a self-existent Being? Does it at once and willingly cease all further experiment in the exercise of imagination? Not at all. There is nothing in the nature of the mind, or of things, to prevent us going back in imagination, at a single step, to the creation of the finite universe, and thereafter exercising our thoughts concerning the existence of the Deity before that creation. Just as we may concentrate

attention upon a particular object, to the exclusion of every other, so that all others are to us for the time as if they had no being; so we can imagine the entire universe out of existence, involving the annihilation of everything, except the conscious self. Can we, then, think of duration without change in the object of thought? Nothing more simple. We do it every day, as has already been shown. I may imagine everything out of existence except myself and the Deity; but, while I imagine or think, it is impossible to think of non-existence on my own part, since to think is consciously to exist, and, by the laws of my own mind, while I think, I must acknowledge the existence of the Divine Being. If, then, I can imagine the whole universe out of existence, and God the sole object of contemplation, how can I think of His continued existence as being duration without change? While contemplating the glorious attributes of His nature, I can estimate His duration by the continual succession going on in self-consciousness. So far, this mode of computation concerning the Divine existence, is quite the same whether applied to duration since the world began, or before the origin of finite existence. This is, moreover, a completely accurate and trustworthy standard of computation by which to estimate the duration of any being, so long as it is the object of thought. But, besides this, the mind may attempt to think of the duration of the Deity "from everlasting," and in doing so it may transfer in imagination the marks of progress which the history of the world affords, so as to make these the measure by which to compute a duration equally long before the world began,

and from that point reached in imagination, we may go further back again, in like manner, proceeding onwards in the vast eternity, until progress is stayed by the consciousness of our inability to advance further. In this way we form a conception of the continued existence of the Deity, or, in other words, a continued conception of the Divine existence, for these are the same. And in doing so, we rest exclusively on the authority of faith for the simple testimony of the eternity of the Divine existence, and the reality of that duration we attempt to conceive.

What we can do, by an exercise of imagination, in regard to the past, we can do with equal ease in reference to the future, in attempting to think of a possible continuance of existence. Essentially restricted as we are to the present, we can carry forward our thought from one imaginary stage to another in possible succession, and thus repeat exactly the same experiment as in reference to the past, with exactly the same results. Our individual existence is conscious progress in a vast eternity ; at a particular period in the past, the course of succession was originated ; in our experience, it continues now ; but how long it will continue, consciousness does not enable us to determine, though our natural belief bears decided testimony, that He who is "from everlasting" is "to everlasting." That the mind which carries out these experiments concerning the unbeginning and the unending existence, will itself continue in being for evermore, is what Revelation has disclosed to us. In accepting this as a matter of belief, we can form a *distinct* conception of such existence, in contrast to the existence of

material forms around us, which shall cease ; and a *clear* conception of the forms of life we shall have as intellectual, moral, and religious beings ; and an *indefinite* conception of the continuance of that existence for ever. The conception which we can form of our own continued existence to eternity, is that which we can also form, in like manner, of the necessary existence of the Deity, there being no difference as to the exercise of mind, in the fact that in the one form of continuous existence there is constant succession, and in the other there is none. While there is conscious succession in carrying out such an exercise of thought, it must be a matter of observation whether there is succession in the existence of the object; whether there will be succession in the continuance of any existence must, as in this case, be a matter of faith.

It will be seen, from what has been said concerning the excursion which the mind can make in attempting to conceive of the continuance of known existence, that I hold that in these excursions it comes into contact, by the laws of intelligence, with the existence of the Infinite Being. It does not, and cannot, rest contented with an attempt to measure the continuance of the various forms of changeable existence, but rises from that to the Unchangeable One. With the Infinite Being as the sole object of contemplation, the mind can apply its ordinary forms of measurement to the continuance of His existence, and that indefinitely both in the past and in the future. In each case, the mind finishes the excursion of thought indefinitely, and altogether from the consciousness of its own inability to proceed further, without the least recognition of limits in the existence contem-

plated. Such limits could not be reached as a mental result, since the experiment is a repetition in thought, either according to personal determination or personal ability, of voluntarily selected symbols of duration. Any limit which can be attained, therefore, must be simply the cessation of the mental effort. On the other hand, such limits there are not, and cannot be, in the Divine existence, as we are assured on the authority of a primary *belief* of our own nature. The attempt, then, by the use of ordinarily accepted signs of duration, to form a conception of the continued existence of the Eternal One, is perfectly legitimate according to the laws of thought, and sanctioned as in harmony with the reality of the Divine Being, by that fundamental conviction on which we rest for the assurance of the being and glory of the Deity. By the combination in the mind of the results of the excursion into the past and into the future, we attain to a conception clear, distinct, but indefinite, of the eternity of God's existence.

The reader is now in possession of the doctrine concerning Time, and its relation to discussions on the Infinite, which I have been ultimately brought to adopt, as the result of patient reconsideration of all the facts connected with this branch of the subject on hand. Our knowledge of Time arises exclusively from the recognition of actual succession both within the mind and in the world without. We are all necessarily conscious of the succession of distinct mental operations, and in this it is that all have the original *consciousness* of what we have called Time. In turning attention to the external world, we perceive there also a regular succession of events con-

stantly continuing in various forms, and in this we have the original *knowledge* of Time or succession, apart from that which belongs to our own consciousness. But the question arises, How do we find the unity of all the different forms of succession? By the traces of harmonious progression easily discovered, we come to the conception of a Cosmos, and we are led to acknowledge that the succession of events has some uniform and harmonious order, apart from our own consciousness, by thinking of these events as recognised by some great Intelligence who controls them. Succession implies power to produce the events which occur in order. It is so in our own consciousness, and we *believe* it to be so in reference to all the events of the external world; and, therefore, succession and duration among the changeable forms of being are possible only because of the existence of a great and unchangeable Intelligence.

From the above considerations, it will be seen that all defence of a recognition of a distinct Infinite in pure Time is herewith abandoned. As it does not in any case come before the mind as a distinct object of thought, —as it is not recognised as a separate existence,—as it consists only in the relation of things in their order of succession,—I cease to speak of infinite Time, or to argue for such a conception, though I still insist that we have a belief in the everlasting existence of the Deity, and an indefinite knowledge of that eternity of duration. But time or succession exists only inasmuch as an object exists; and duration is possible only inasmuch as an object continues to exist. So soon as these facts are recognised, the mind may be roused to an inquiry con-

cerning the progress of past events, and, going back in thought, stage by stage, contemplating the relation of events recorded in history, it may come to think of the origin of finite existence. From that, it rises by the very necessities of our intelligence to the recognition, both in belief and thought, of the one Infinite Being. In this way, thought concerning Time, that is, thought concern ing the succession and duration of changeable existence, though not itself involving a recognition of the Infinite, leads necessarily to the Infinite Being, who existed before succession, or what we call Time, had a beginning, and whose duration is essentially eternal.

In taking the view presented concerning the nature of Time, I hold that it is "a certain correlation of existences," but not, as Sir W. Hamilton has said, "the *image* or the *concept* of a certain correlation of existences." But this simple view of Time, as it seems to me, sweeps the field clear of the whole subsequent discussions concerning Time, in which Hamilton has indulged. If time be even only the "image or concept of the correlation of existences," as he has said, it is altogether inadmissible to deal in logical subtleties concerning "whole and parts," as though Time were a *separate existence*, capable of division both in fact and in thought.

A few illustrations must suffice to show how Sir W. Hamilton's first statement concerning Time, disposes of all his other arguments in reference to it. If Time be only "the concept of a certain correlation of existences," we cannot conceive of it as "unconditionally limited," and the discussion concerning absolute time disappears. Nor can we speak of infinite time, since we are only

conscious of the "correlation of existences;" therefore, the whole discussion concerning infinite time is set aside. What has been said concerning the "regress of time" is self-contradictory, and there are no such things as "the infinite regress and infinite progress, taken together, (to) involve" the triple contradiction -- of "an infinite concluded,—an infinite commencing,—and of two infinites, not exclusive of each other." If time be only the relation of dependent events in their order of succession, it can be in no sense whatever absolute or infinite; though in attempting to go back in thought upon the events of the past, we may reach the origin of such relative succession as that to which we give the name of Time, and from that origin of dependent existence, we must rise to the Absolutely Unchangeable Being, with whom there is no succession.

Before leaving this part of the question it is necessary to remark upon one of the most singular statements which Sir W. Hamilton has made in reference to time. He says: "In regard to time past, and time future, there is comparatively no difficulty, because these are positively thought as protensive quantities. But time present, when we attempt to realize it, seems to escape us altogether,— to vanish into nonentity. The present cannot be conceived as of any length, of any quantity, of any protension, in short, as *anything positive*. (!) It is only conceivable as a *negation*, as the point or line (and these are only negations) in which the past ends and the future begins, - in which they limit each other."[1] I do not profess to understand how, on Hamilton's theory,

[1] *Discussions*, p. 581, Appendix.

time can be called a "protensive quantity;" but that any view of time should lead to the practical annihilation of time as a present reality, is surely a very strong presumption against its validity. There are said to be two senses in which time is all-important, that is, as either past or future! Present time is a *negation!* The point or line in which the past ends and the future begins! The point in which our past thoughts terminate and our future thoughts commence, but in which we have no exercise of thought!

Let any man examine his own consciousness, and say if his recognition of time be not precisely the reverse of what Sir William has stated? Is it not true that we realize time only as present, and not as either past or future? I leave the question for decision by each man's consciousness.

From the view which has been given of our conception of time, it will be seen that I now acknowledge the validity of the position laid down by Sir W. Hamilton in his letter to me, where he has said that "Time and Space must be excluded from the supposed notion of the Infinite." But when he adds that "the Infinite, if positively thought it could be, must be thought as under neither space nor time,"[1] it is needful to observe, that I hold that, while succession is a necessary condition of our exercise of consciousness, we do not necessarily recognise in the object of knowledge or of thought, any successive modifications in the form of its existence. The Infinite Being, as unchangeable, is above all succession, yet has He duration in existence, and He recognises the succes-

[1] *Lectures on Metaphysics*, II. 531.

sion which is characteristic of dependent existence. But since succession is only a condition of our thought, and not necessarily a condition of the object of thought, the simple fact that the Infinite Being has an existence above succession, does not shut Him out from recognition.

What Sir W. Hamilton has only hinted at, Dr. Mansel has broadly stated; it is, therefore, important here to turn to the passage in the *Limits of Religious Thought* on this subject. Though it is long, justice to the author seems to require that it be given without the omission of even a single clause which he thought needful. It is the following: "All human consciousness, as being a change in our mental state, is necessarily subject to the law of time in its two manifestations of *succession* and *duration*. Every object of whose existence we can in any way be conscious, is necessarily apprehended by us as succeeding in time to some former object of consciousness, and as itself occupying a certain portion of time. In the former point of view, it is manifest from what has been said before, that whatever succeeds something else, and is distinguished from it, is necessarily apprehended as finite; for distinction is itself a limitation. In the latter point of view, it is no less manifest that whatever is conceived as having a continuous existence in time is equally apprehended as finite. For continuous existence is necessarily conceived as divisible into successive moments. One portion has already gone by, another is yet to come; each successive moment is related to something which has preceded and to something which is to follow, and out of such relations the

entire existence is made up. The acts by which such existence is manifested, being continuous in time, have, at any given moment, a further activity still to come; the object so existing must therefore always be regarded as capable of becoming something which it is not yet actually, as having an existence incomplete, and receiving at each instant a further completion. It is manifest, therefore, that *if all objects of human thought exist in time*, no such object can be regarded as exhibiting or representing the true nature of an Infinite Being."[1]

The reader has now the full advantage of perusing Dr. Mansel's complete statement, and of possessing the necessary materials for judgment concerning the validity of his reasoning. The last sentence contains the conclusion to which the whole paragraph is intended to lead, and I shall now endeavour, as briefly as possible, to indicate the objections which I have to urge, equally against the preliminary statements, and the conclusion itself. We are perfectly agreed in reference to the fact that all human consciousness is "subject to the law of *Time*, in its two manifestations of succession and duration." But, in opposition to what is either distinctly stated, or manifestly implied, I shall endeavour to maintain these three propositions: (1.) That succession in consciousness does not necessarily involve the recognition of transition or mutation in the objects presented; (2.) That duration in existence does not necessarily involve succession; and (3.) That the Infinite Being, as above succession, and yet having an eternal duration, is not beyond the sphere of

[1] *Limits of Religious Thought*, pp. 77-79.

knowledge and thought, because of the subjection of consciousness to the law of Time.

Succession in consciousness does not necessarily involve the recognition of transition or mutation in the objects presented. Consciousness, as embracing continual change in mental state, is a consciousness, at one and the same time, of the recognition of the object presented before the mind, and of the order of succession in the mental states. But the invariable succession involved in consciousness has not necessarily its counterpart in a similar succession in the external existences which become the objects of attention. Succession is an invariable mental fact, but succession may or may not be observed as an external fact affecting the existence of the objects presented before the mind. If we stand at any point in a crowded street to watch the multitudes who hurry past, there is succession equally in the current of our obser vation, and in the events observed. But if we stand gazing upon some quiet landscape, where not a movement is seen, there is still succession in our acts of consciousness, though there is none recognised in the objects contemplated. The reader will perceive at once what objection I have to urge, when Dr. Mansel makes the transition from consciousness, to treat of the *objects* before the mind. It seems to me that there is a transparent fallacy in the second sentence of the above passage. He says, "Every *object*, of whose existence we can be in any way conscious, *is necessarily apprehended by us as succeeding in time to some former object* of consciousness, and as itself occupying a certain portion of time." I deny that "every *object* is necessarily apprehended by us as

succeeding in time to some former object of consciousness." It is a very broad distinction which exists between *acts* of consciousness, and *objects* of consciousness, admitting of two different forms of succession, which are not necessarily co-ordinate. This distinction admits of a twofold assertion concerning succession. It may be said, on the one hand, that every act of mind is recognised as succeeding to some former act; and it may be said, on the other hand, that "every *object* is necessarily apprehended by us as succeeding in time to some former *object*." The first of these statements is universally admitted as true, the second is most certainly false. If Dr. Mansel only mean to affirm that objects are recognised in succession, this is still nothing more than the declaration that we are conscious of a *succession of mental acts*, conversant with different objects. To say that external existences become objects of perception or of knowledge one after the other, is only to say, that the mind exercises its cognitive power on different objects in succession; and, by this statement, the law of *time*, as a law of *succession*, is perceived only as applying to consciousness, and not to the objects with which our cognitive powers are engaged. If Dr. Mansel mean, that succession in our acts of cognition involves succession in the order of external existence, the assertion is indefensible, as being contradictory of the admitted facts of consciousness. The statement in the first sentence of the passage quoted, which refers to *consciousness* being subject to the law of Time, and the statement in the second sentence concerning *every object* being apprehended as succeeding in time to some former object, are either iden-

tical in meaning, and refer exclusively to the consciousness of succession in our mental acts, or the last statement is altogether a mistake.

In the last clause of the sentence now under review, when it is said that "every object is necessarily apprehended by us *as itself occupying a certain portion of time*," this "apprehension" cannot be the recognition of anything in the object, but must be simply the consciousness of the time occupied in the contemplation of it. That is to say, if an object is *apprehended* by us "as itself occupying a certain portion of time," this can mean nothing more than that the mind is conscious of "occupying a certain portion of time" with its apprehension of the existing object. Every one who *believes* in the existence of external reality, *believes*, of course, that each distinct existence "itself occupies a certain portion of time," that is, has a certain *duration*, and this I hold most firmly; but, when we are speaking of how an "object is necessarily *apprehended*," our knowledge of Time is obtained in that case, as in every other, from our own consciousness. Every existence has a duration of its own, whether that existence be an object of apprehension or not; but in every act of apprehension, what the mind recognises, as external to itself, is simply the existing object, whereas the knowledge of *duration* is obtained exclusively from the consciousness of its own operations. But, if it be said that not only is consciousness subject to the law of Time, in the sense of duration; but that duration in the object itself is a necessary law for its apprehension, I reply, that in so far as the mind is concerned, this *duration* in the object is nothing more than its *existence*; if

it be said that an object has a duration, this is only to say that it has continued existence ; and if it be said that duration in the object is a law of our apprehension, this is only to repeat the truism that an object must exist in order to be apprehended. When, therefore, it is said that an object is apprehended "as itself occupying a certain portion of time," it is not true that there is any division of time into portions, or that there is any recognised occupancy, but simply that the mind is conscious of protracted attention having been given to an existing object. Time is still recognised and measured by consciousness, and not by anything in the object.

When Dr. Mansel says, by way of deduction from the preceding statements, "that whatever succeeds something else, and is distinguished from it, is necessarily apprehended as finite," I think he altogether fails in the attempt to exclude the Infinite Being from our apprehension, because of the acknowledged subjection of the mind to the law of succession. The declaration that "distinction is itself a limitation," belongs to another part of the discussion, and may be passed as a matter already considered. But, in so far as our author speaks here only of the order of succession, in which external existences become objects of apprehension, and not of any recognised succession in the order of their being, it is manifest that the law of succession, as applying to our mental operations, has no application whatever to the objects themselves. He does not mean to say that objects have existence only as they are apprehended by us ; and, if this be not meant, the succession spoken of is no limitation of the existence of the objects, and cannot

be in the very least degree an indication whether the object be finite or infinite.

I have, however, admitted that, though all forms of existence may not imply succession in themselves, every form of existence has a certain *duration*. To this must now be added that, *duration does not necessarily imply succession*. Our consciousness involves submission to the law of succession, because it is the consciousness of continual change. But, while we are able to measure duration of existence in external objects, by making them the objects of observation at different periods in the course of our mental experience, and thereafter exercising memory concerning what has passed, our observation does not invariably imply the recognition of succession in the object, while we attempt to mark the duration of its existence. In passing a particular rock we may remember having passed it some years before, and though unable to discover any trace upon itself of change in the form of its existence during our absence, we are able to form a conception of its duration throughout the period which has elapsed in our personal history since we visited it. Though our conception of duration is obtained by the use of accepted symbols of succession, it does not imply any cognition of corresponding succession in the object whose duration is the matter of contemplation. If, then, our belief in the Infinite One testify that He is above the law of succession, because free from all mutation, there is nothing in that fact to debar us from some conception of His duration. I deny the truth of Dr. Mansel's declaration, that "continuous existence is necessarily conceived as divisible into suc-

cessive moments." This is once more the transference of a mental law beyond its proper sphere. It is an attempt to impose the laws of consciousness, upon forms of existence independent of consciousness; and, if carried to its legitimate results, will involve philosophical inquiry in endless confusion. While we carry on our observation in accordance with the laws which regulate our consciousness, it is possible to recognise with the greatest accuracy that these laws do not apply to the objects to which we direct attention. Though the exercise of our consciousness imply succession, it is a very simple thing for us to observe that there is no trace of the subjection of the object of cognition to the same law. When, therefore, it is said that "continuous existence is necessarily conceived as divisible into successive moments," one of two things must be meant. It is either intended that in *our conception* of continuous existence there is necessarily the consciousness of succession in the mental operation, which can be marked out by the successive stages which characterize it; or, it is intended, that *in addition to* this consciousness of succession in the mind, there is *necessarily* the conception, or, in its primary form, the cognition, of successive changes in the existence of the object. The former is the truth in the case; the latter is altogether false. While I admit that our consciousness of the duration of any object always implies succession, because all consciousness does so, I deny that duration necessarily implies succession in the existing object. If such succession there be, it must arise from the nature of the object, and the conditions to which it is subjected; not by any means from the

consciousness which we have of succession in our mental states, while we observe it. The law of consciousness regulates consciousness alone, and does not prescribe conditions of existence to the object of cognition. Nothing can be more manifest as an element in the standard of philosophical truth, than that any property attributed to an object recognised as distinct from the mind, must be recognised in that existence as apprehended, and not gratuitously assigned to it by the forced application of a law, which is admitted to have its proper sphere in thought. Our consciousness of succession imposes no like condition on the object whose existence is recognised as independent from our own; nor does it in the least hinder us in the recognition of an object whose existence presents no traces of successive changes. Consciousness, therefore, though always operating in submission to the law of time or succession, is not thereby hindered from the apprehension of an unchangeable being, which the Infinite One is; nor from the apprehension of eternal duration, which implies the absence of all succession, as in the case of the Deity.

Will Dr. Mansel maintain that all duration implies succession? I maintain the contrary. I have shown that *duration* is only *continued existence;* and if so, existence does not necessarily involve succession, continued existence does not necessarily involve a course of change. If, then, succession belong to the existence of an object, that succession must be established on other grounds than on the fact of its simple existence; again, if an object have continued existence, subject to a series of changes, that course of change must be established on other grounds

than on the fact of its continued existence. The Infinite Being has necessary and continuous existence - an eternity of existence; but neither does His "continuous existence" involve division into "successive moments," nor is His continuous existence "*necessarily conceived* as divisible into successive moments."

After having dwelt at such length on Time, I shall content myself with a very brief reference to Space, which may very readily suffice, as I do not apprehend that any discussion which can be raised concerning space has any relation to the Infinite. What we have been accustomed to denominate Space is the recognised relation of extended objects, and as it applies exclusively to what is extended, it has no application whatever to mind and its operations. If we admit of the distinction between empty space and occupied space, what is called empty space is the relative position of two bodies, or the distance which separates them, and is capable of being measured by the same standard as the extended surface of the objects themselves. If extension be considered as equivalent to space, which I am inclined to deny, then it is a perceived quality of objects, and it may be said in a sense capable of vindication, that we *see* space. In this application alone can it be said with appreciable meaning that space is an "extensive quantity." I conceive, however, that the term *space* is more usually and properly applied to what has been designated *empty space*, in contrast to extended surface. And such empty space is nothing more than the relative distance of extended objects from each other, measured on a standard similar to that which applies to the bodies themselves. In this

way it is equally accurate to say that there is a certain specified *distance* between the bodies, and that there is *nothing* between them, because space is nothing but their relation to each other.

This being, as it seems to me, the true doctrine concerning space, I no longer plead for any knowledge of the Infinite in this relation. I yield to what I now recognise as the force of Sir W. Hamilton's criticism of the opinions formerly maintained, and admit that "time and space must be excluded from the supposed notion of *the Infinite.*"[1] But while admitting without the least reservation that Sir W. Hamilton's criticism has dislodged me from my former position, I consider at the same time, that it also overturns the whole course of his own reasoning concerning space, whether regarded as whole or as part. If we take Sir W. Hamilton's definition of the nature of space, he says:—"Space, like time, is only the intuition or the concept of a certain correlation of existence." Now, though I do not admit that space is itself an "intuition or a concept," I grant that it is "a certain correlation of existence." But if this be acknowledged, everything is granted that is necessary for overturning Hamilton's subsequent statements. Little more is needed in order to show this than simply to quote them. If space be only a correlation of objects, how can he speak of it as *a whole, a unity, a totality?* Immediately after giving the definition, he says:—"Thought is equally powerless in realizing a notion either of the *absolute totality*, or of the *infinite immensity* of space." What is meant by an absolute

[1] *Lectures on Metaphysics*, II. p. 531.

totality, or an infinite immensity of a "correlation of existence?" Or take this passage: "Considered in itself, space is positively inconceivable,—as a whole either infinitely unbounded, or absolutely bounded; as a part either infinitely divisible, or absolutely indivisible. . . . We can think it either as an indefinite whole, or as an indefinite part." If space be only the "correlation" of separate existences, it can neither be a whole nor a part, and the entire set of logical subtleties superinduced on the fanciful whole and part have no application whatever.

Finally, all that is said concerning the impossibility of reaching the limits of space, proceeds upon a complete subversion of the explanation given of its nature. If it be simply a correlation of existence, it can be contemplated only in so far as such correlation is recognised or known. Wherever our contemplation of such correlation ceases, we fail to have any further recognition of space. And when it is said that we cannot in thought reach the limits of space, the reference is clearly to an effort of the imagination in stretching out one beyond the other a succession of marks symbolic of limitation, such as imaginary pillars, or constantly enlarging circumferences of circles. In such an effort of the imagination we are not dealing with space at all, since space has no application to our mental energies. It is not true here, as it is in the case of those experiments concerning time, that while prosecuting them we are conscious of the very relation with which the experiment deals. The attempt to advance the pillars still farther onward, or to enlarge the circles, is purely an effort of imagination working with

the symbols of external realities, and nothing more. In prosecuting the effort there is *progression* in time, or the succession in mental states, but there is positively no progression whatever in space. The experiment is nothing more than a repetition of the experiments attempted in connexion with the relation of succession or time, only it has received a new name, and is falsely represented as applying to the relation of extended existence, designated space. That which has a reality in reference to time, has none whatever in reference to space, since the imaginary progression has no application to a real existence, as in the case of time, when we seek to compute the existence of the Deity ; and, still further, while attempting to carry out such an effort to reach limits in some professed object called infinite space, we cannot plead the authority of faith, or any other authority whatever, in support of the reality of such an existence.

The considerations thus presented are sufficient to show the grounds on which I now give unreserved assent to Sir W. Hamilton's declaration that time and space must be excluded from the alleged notion of the Infinite. I grant that neither time nor space is known as infinite, therefore we have not a conception of infinite time, or of infinite space. And besides, space being recognised as the relation of extended bodies, and the Deity being known as spiritual or non-extended, our knowledge of the Infinite Being is not the knowledge of existence in space. And further, as the energies of mind are not subject to the law of space, that condition of extended existence never comes into view while the mind is con-

cerned with the Infinite Being. But since time is a law of mind, as well as a law of external existence, we are conscious of the relation of time, both in our knowledge and in our thought, though the object of knowledge and of conception be recognised as superior to the law which regulates our mental activity. While there is necessarily succession in our consciousness, there may be no recognition on our part of succession in the object known.

CHAPTER VII.

THE KNOWLEDGE OF THE INFINITE BEING AS FIRST CAUSE.

When engaged with the consideration of the source of our belief in the existence of an Infinite Being, I endeavoured to show, that any attempt to account for the origin of finite existence, material and mental, raises in the mind a necessary belief in an Infinite Intelligence as the First Cause. That this belief is found among the first principles originally communicated in our mental constitution, is the doctrine here maintained; and, after what has been said concerning the established relation between faith and knowledge, it is necessary to indicate the nature of that knowledge of the Deity which is attained by contemplating him as First Cause. If all faith implies knowledge, and if each necessary belief arises in the mind when the facts are contemplated which require its application, it is manifest that in the study of the works of God, we may attain a knowledge of the Great Creator. And, still further, this knowledge will not be of the same measure in all men, nor will it continue of the same measure in any mind, but will be found unfolding within us, as we discover the wonders of creation.

The Infinite Being exists in various *relations* to His

creatures, according to the nature which they have received from His hand. These relations, I maintain, afford to the mind the opportunity of acquiring a knowledge of the Infinite One, and of extending that knowledge after it has been obtained. The assertion that in such relations God is not known *as Infinite*, seems to me nothing more than a logical quibble, sprung from a false definition of the Infinite. If the Deity exists in such relations, and is still infinite in His nature, if known in these relations, we have a knowledge of the Infinite One.

It is especially at this point of the discussion, that I feel constrained to lift a decided protest against Sir W. Hamilton's definition of the Infinite, as unconditioned, that is, free from all relation. He defines the Infinite as the unconditionally unlimited, that is, unlimited in nature, and free from all conditions or relations. He maintains that the relative is necessarily restrictive. According to this definition, therefore, it must be maintained that, before the act of creation, God was infinite; by the act of creation, He ceased to be infinite, that is, He became finite. No one will attribute to the distinguished author the doctrine that God, as now existing, is not an infinite God; but, either his definition of the Infinite must be set aside as erroneous, or the belief in the existence of an infinite God must be surrendered. There are few who will find any difficulty in making a choice. That before the act of creation God did exist as an infinite God, must be admitted as beyond all question; for I do not argue with any one who would attempt to deny this, inasmuch as I do not believe that it can be philosophically denied. Granting that, before the crea-

tion, God did exist as an infinite God, what was there in the act of creation, or what is there in the existence of created objects, which proves that God has ceased to be infinite, or which in any way prevents Him existing as infinite? God, indeed, exists in relation to His creatures, but who will assert that He is in any sense limited by them?

In so far, therefore, as the term "unconditioned" is defined as indicating what is unrestricted or unlimited, it is applicable to God; but, in so far as it is defined as indicating the negation of all relation, it is not applicable to the Infinite Being. If, therefore, it be asserted that the Infinite is that which is unrestricted and unlimited, I admit it, but rejoin that the Infinite may nevertheless exist in relation. If, however, it be asserted, as Sir W. Hamilton has done, that the Infinite is that whose existence involves the negation of all relation, I reply that no such infinite exists, and, consequently, the arguments to prove the impossibility of any knowledge of *such* an Infinite, are entirely apart from the question.

Sir W. Hamilton, in defining the Infinite, and in arguing in reference to it, plainly deals with a mere *abstraction*, for which no one pleads, either in existence or in thought. It is the Infinite which he considers, rather than the only Infinite Being. He takes the *term* Infinite, to designate an abstraction which he characterizes as unlimited, unrelated, unconditioned. What, then, is this Infinite? It is nothing. It has no existence, either externally or in thought. The gratuitous introduction of such an abstraction as this into the speculations concerning the Infinite, favoured as it has been by

philosophers both German and British, though it may have given scope for much acute and ingenious reasoning, has resulted in perplexity, from which philosophy can escape only by sweeping away the thing itself, as less than a shadow, and really a nonentity, on which words have been only wasted.

M. Cousin has very well remarked that there is a tendency towards two false and opposite extremes in contemplating the Infinite God. The one is that which arrives at Pantheism, and identifies God with all creation; the other is that which makes God a mere Abstraction, whose existence requires the negation of everything else. Pantheism, while it does not separate God from the world, makes it impossible for Him to exist except in essential union with it. A metaphysical Abstraction runs to the very opposite extreme, and makes it impossible for God to exist in relation to anything else. On this definition, God becomes an "absolute unity, so far superior and prior to the world, as to be foreign to it, and to make it impossible to comprehend how this unity could ever depart from itself, and how, from a principle like this, the vast universe, with the variety of its forces and phenomena, could proceed."[1] It is wholly with this abstraction that Sir W. Hamilton deals, and it appears to me cause for deepest regret that such a philosopher, by taking this unwarrantable view, has endeavoured to establish the impossibility of any knowledge of the Infinite, and, consequently, of the Infinite God. Most assuredly, while such an Infinite as that described does not exist, God does exist, and, though in direct violation

[1] Preface to second edition of M. Cousin's *Fragments Philosophiques.*

of the definition, He exists as infinite, and yet in relation. In this mistake of the abstract for the real, seems to me to lie the key to almost the whole of Sir W. Hamilton's arguments against a knowledge of the Infinite. All such reasoning proceeds upon a false method. We are not to give forth a definition, and, from this fictitious basis, proceed to draw certain inferences, as if these must coincide with the facts of consciousness. The method must be essentially psychological. From amongst the facts of consciousness, the entire inquiry should take its rise, while an attempt is made to ascertain whether, in these facts, there is to be found a knowledge of something more than the finite. It is not an abstraction with which we deal, but a knowledge of a great reality for which we seek. God is not a Being *whose existence prevents all being besides.* He is not an exclusive Unity, who is bound by a mysterious necessity, which prevents the existence of aught else. In the eloquent language of M. Cousin,—"The God of consciousness is not an abstract God—a solitary monarch exiled beyond the limits of creation on the desert throne of a silent Eternity—an absolute existence, which resembles even the negation of existence."[1]

The Infinite God does exist in the relation of cause; and I hope presently to vindicate for man a knowledge of Him in this relation. Before endeavouring, however, to determine what is the nature and extent of our knowledge of God as the great First Cause, it is necessary to consider what is the correct doctrine in reference to our notion of causality; in other words, What is the true

[1] Preface to first edition of *Fragments Philosophiques.*

theory of cause and effect? Here, too, Sir W. Hamilton holds a doctrine at variance from that of other philosophers; and here again I regret to differ from him.

According to his doctrine, "a cause is simply everything without which the effect would not result." As a necessary consequence of this definition, it is asserted that a plurality of causes is necessary for the production of an effect. "A new appearance" is said to be the occasion for our judgment of causality. "When aware of a new appearance, we are *unable* to conceive that therein has originated any new existence, and are therefore *constrained* to think that what now appears to us under a new form, had previously existence under others. These *others* (for they are always plural) are called its cause; and a cause (or more properly causes) we cannot but suppose. . . . We are utterly unable to construe it in thought as possible, that the complement of existence has been either increased or diminished. We cannot conceive either, on the one hand, nothing becoming something, or on the other, something becoming nothing. . . . The mind is thus compelled to recognise an absolute identity of existence in the effect and in the complement of its causes,—between the *causatum* and the *causa*. We think the cause to contain all that is contained in the effect; the effect to contain nothing but what is contained in the causes. Each is the sum of the other." It thus appears that Sir W. Hamilton makes our notion of causality convertible with the necessity of thinking continuance of existence. It is said to result from the *condition* of our thought, by which we are required to think everything as existing, and existing in

time; and, as we cannot think a thing beginning to exist, we must think that it previously existed under a different form, that is, that it had a cause. This theory, therefore, analyses "the judgment of causality into a form of the mental law of the conditioned," as applied to a thing, thought under the form of existence *relative in Time*. It is thus stated,—"We cannot know, we cannot think a thing, except under the attribute of *Existence;* we cannot know or think a thing to exist, except as *in Time;* and we cannot know or think a thing to exist in time, and think it *absolutely to commence or terminate.*"

This doctrine has certainly many of the merits which its author claims for it. It has simplicity, and it postulates no new power to account for the phenomenon. These are undoubted advantages, and ought to insure its preference over all others, provided the doctrine be in accordance with facts, and sufficient to account for them. But, unless this be the case, no degree of simplicity or of unity can save it; and, as it appears to me insufficient, I am again constrained to take an antagonistic course.

1. The notion of causality is not convertible with that of continued existence. In other words, our notion of causality cannot be reduced to simple compliance with that condition of thought, which requires that we think every thing as existing. Sir W. Hamilton says, that we cannot conceive a thing beginning to be, because we cannot think a time when the object did not exist. This I consider a fallacy. In a previous Chapter, it has been shown that time cannot be recognised apart from

an object. Now, it is true, that the one term of the relation, namely, the object, cannot be dropped, while the mind continues to contemplate time, apart from the object. It does not thence follow, however, that we cannot think of a time when this object did not exist. There is a fallacy in the fundamental principle upon which this doctrine is built, viz., that the causal judgment is only an instance in which our thought complies with the condition that every thing must be thought as existing. For example, a sculptor gets a block of marble, out of which he forms a statue. When viewing the statue, we recognise a new form of existence, or, in the language of this theory, we recognise "a new appearance." There has been some change, and, if the doctrine of Hamilton be true, the manner in which the mind satisfies itself concerning the production of this change, is by passing to the form under which the object previously existed. This is the process which is usually called the mental necessity for thinking a *cause* for "a new appearance." Let any one trace out the following course of thought, and say, if in so doing, the mind is conscious of the notion of causality. A statue beautifully cut in marble stands before us; it cannot always have existed in that form; it was formerly a rough block of marble. Think of a statue *as formerly a block of marble*, and you have all that this doctrine grants as involved in the notion of causality. I venture to affirm that the phenomenon which we denominate the causal judgment, is never here realized, far less explained. Hamilton says,—"We are utterly unable to construe it in thought as possible, that the complement of existence has either been increased or diminished."

Without inquiring whether this be true, which, however, I question, it may be admitted in the case before us that what is not now hard marble, lies as dust at the base of the statue. Further, it is said,—"We are constrained to think that what now appears to us under a new form, had previously existence under *others*." The ordinary forms of expression on this subject would have led us to say, *under another*, but let that pass. We conceive that statue and the dust at its base as previously existing in one block; I ask, what then? All has been admitted, but what has this to do with the *cause* which produced the change? We recognise this change; we observe the statue and the dust at its base; we think of them both as previously existing in one block of marble; but that there was a cause which produced this change, and that we must think of such a cause, are facts apart from all this. But it may be argued that I have, after all, taken only one of the forms under which the statue previously existed. Where else, then, is another to be found? It will be said that the image of it previously existed in the mind of the sculptor. To this the reply might be given, that the image of the statue, and the statue itself, are two very different things. The statue is without us, but the image originally in the mind is still there, and can never pass beyond it. But, for the sake of brevity, it may be simply remarked, that there are many images in the mind which are never realized in external reality, and it is thereby manifest that the image is not the *cause* of the external manifestation. The image had certainly an important relation to the object produced, but not the relation of cause. Again, it may be asserted that

the operative energy of the sculptor has gone forth from him, and is embodied in the work. But who will affirm that this energy *exists in* the statue? If it be true that the effect is only the complement of what previously existed in the *causes*, what is there in that statue, besides what was previously in the marble, which once belonged to the sculptor? We can see how much of the block of marble exists in the statue, but not how much of the sculptor is there. And, besides all this, the recognition of the change in the form of existence does not realize in us our notion of cause. On this ground, I consider that the doctrine of Sir W. Hamilton does not embrace the phenomenon, far less account for it.[1]

2. The theory fails to recognise the element of *power*, which necessarily belongs to our notion of causality. This naturally follows from what has been said in the previous paragraph. In the example there given, it has been shown that to think of the effect under the form in which it previously existed, is not to think of its cause. It may be true that what now exists as an effect, is thought as previously existent in some different form; but this does not by any means embrace that mental phenomenon by which we necessarily believe that there must have been some *cause* for the change; in other words, that there has been some *power* in opera-

1 I would call special attention to an article of striking ability on the Philosophy of Sir W. Hamilton, which is to be found in the *North British Review*, vol. xviii. It is pervaded by the true philosophic spirit, manifests extensive learning, and is characterized by thorough grasp of thought. Some portion of the article is occupied with an examination of Sir W. Hamilton's theory of causality, and I most willingly acknowledge having been, in part, anticipated in my objections to Sir William's theory on cause and effect, by the able and much esteemed author of that article. This article is now reprinted in the collected *Essays in Philosophy*, by Professor Fraser.

tion to *produce* the result. If we examine our consciousness, we shall find that there is always an element of power in our notion of a cause,—a fact of which the theory entirely fails to take any account. Our notion of causality cannot be reduced to the notion of mere *existence*, it is not embraced under the notion of a mere *continuance* of existence, it is not even convertible with an acknowledgment of a change in the *form* of existence. A cause is that on account of which the change occurs; it is that which *produces* the change. Take the example of a stone broken in two by the stroke of a hammer. We perceive the two pieces of stone, we think of them as having previously existed in one whole, but we have yet to think that a certain power has separated them before we have obtained our notion of causality. Thus, and thus only, can we recognise a cause. Without having in the mind the necessary belief that there has been an operation of power, we fail to experience any notion of causality; and, as neglecting this fact, the theory of Sir W. Hamilton does not embrace the phenomenon to be explained.

3. The theory errs in asserting a *plurality* of causes for every effect. Is it true, as is asserted, that we think of two or more causes for every effect? Common language does not seem to indicate that this is the common belief. The author has scarcely announced it, when, in the very next clause, he feels the difficulty of simply expressing it, and says,—"*a cause* (or more properly *causes*) we cannot but suppose." The singular finds expression, notwithstanding the theory. But how does the theory agree with the facts of consciousness? Out of a

piece of iron a man makes a ploughshare. It is asserted that our notion of causality results from the necessity of thinking of the object as existing, and this led naturally to the doctrine of a duality of causes. In the case presented, to think of the ploughshare as previously existing, is to think of the iron in its unwrought state; do we, then, think of the iron as one cause, and the man as another? Is the iron in any way contemplated as a *cause* of the ploughshare? Hamilton defines a cause as "simply everything without which the effect would not result;" no doubt, then, without the iron there could have been no ploughshare; do we, therefore, consider the iron a *cause*, and admit the above definition to be correct? There can be no hesitation in the answer. The assertion that the iron is a *cause* of the ploughshare, is a palpable violation of our consciousness. No man was ever heard to speak thus. Our notion of a cause is that of an operating power, and we do not consider the iron as such. There is but one cause, that is, the agent whose personal exertion changed the rude material into a useful instrument of husbandry. There is, therefore, manifest error in defining a cause as "everything without which the effect would not result." There are many such things, which we, nevertheless, do not regard as causes, simply because, notwithstanding their existence, the effect could not have been brought about without the exercise of some power to apply them aright. Take another example. Some water falls upon a sheet of paper and spoils it. Without the water, the paper could not have been spoilt; without the paper, there would have been none to spoil. The presence of both of these was necessary for

the occurrence of the result. But who thinks of saying that this paper has been spoilt by the combined influence of the paper and the water, for without the presence of either the effect could not have resulted? The thing is ridiculous. The water, or more properly, the spilling of the water, was the *cause* of spoiling the paper. These three assertions, that we are necessitated to think of a cause, because we must think of the effect as previously existing; that a cause is everything without which an effect could not result; and that a plurality of causes is necessary for every effect, embrace the foundation of Sir W. Hamilton's theory, and fall together. There may, or there may not, be a plurality of causes, but such plurality is no necessity in the case.[1]

4. The theory errs in asserting that "a new appearance" or "event" affords the only occasion on which the causal judgment arises in the mind. There can be no doubt, as this theory asserts, that we can think of an object only as existing; but there is another point which is fatal to this theory of causality, we may think of an object existing in its present form, and, without any observation of a change in the mode of its being, we think of a cause for its existence in its present form. Take an example. A steam-engine stands before us, entire in every respect; we recognise no change from the rough materials to the beautiful mechanism; our first glance reveals the thing complete; there is no change going on, nor is there any new appearance being gradually evolved, yet we necessarily affirm, that there

[1] Esse debet aliquid unde fiat, deinde a quo fiat; hoc est *causa;* illud, *materia.* —Seneca, Epist. 65.

must originally have been some cause for its existence in its present form. We do not think of it as previously existing, so that our notion of a cause is not originated by that means ; we think of it as now existing, but still our notion of causality is not in that ; but, *while* we think of it existing, we *also* think of it as having a cause. A relative change in the form of existence—a new appearance—is not necessary to originate in the mind the notion of cause. Nay more, not only do we think of a cause, though we perceive no change, but we believe that there must be a cause *why* there is *no change.* We necessarily think, for example, that there must be a cause for all the parts of the steam-engine remaining combined, for a body continuing at rest, and for the particles of matter adhering. It is erroneous, therefore, to assert that the causal judgment consists "in the universal necessity of which we are conscious, to think *causes for every event.*" The causal judgment really consists in the universal necessity of which we are conscious, to think *a cause for every finite existence.* This declaration, by which I abide, as most certainly sustained by the facts of consciousness, has been severely assailed by some critics, and that, as it appears to me, in a most singular manner. I consider it as clear, that we believe there is a cause which keeps my hand closed, as that there is a cause by which it was closed ; that there is a cause which keeps the balloon fast to the ground, as that there is a cause for its flight ; that there is a Cause above me to whom I owe my existence, as that there is a cause within me producing the succession of phenomena.

5. The theory fails to account for the necessity of believing that there is a cause for every finite existence. This assertion is virtually involved in the preceding observations, but it is necessary formally to distinguish it. The mere perception of the existence of a finite object, necessitates the conviction that it had a cause. In attempting to explain the causal judgment, by declaring that it is nothing else than the conscious necessity to think of some new appearance as previously existing under another form, Hamilton entirely overlooks the fact, that we believe that there is a cause, not only for every change in the form of existence, but for every finite existence, apart from all change. His theory fails to recognise all the instances in which the causal judgment originates, and, in doing so, fails to explain them. Hamilton's theory implies that there is only a necessity to think of causes for *every change*. I assert that the mind is necessitated to believe in a cause for *every finite existence*, whether there be a manifestation of change or not.

6. The theory errs by asserting that the effect is the complement of being contained in the cause. It is said, —"We think the causes to contain all that is contained in the effect; the effect to contain nothing but what is contained in the causes. *Each is the sum of the other.*" This assertion, naturally growing out of the doctrine, carries its destruction in itself. It has been already shown that the mere material out of which the effect is formed is not regarded as a cause at all. In so far, therefore, as the material exists in the effect, it is not the cause existing in its effect. But, if we consider

the real cause, that is, the efficient cause, it will be found that Hamilton's statement is inapplicable. The cause, even *as a cause*, is not either partially or completely absorbed in the effect. The power of the sculptor remains after his statue is finished. If it be said, that the particular exertion of power is gone, this is true; but it has not passed into the statue. If cause and effect be "each the sum of the other," it necessarily follows that when the effect begins to exist, the cause must cease to exist. The sculptor will cease to possess his power after his first effort. For the rest of his life he may stand to gaze at the well-finished and smoothly polished piece of dead matter, into which his power has passed, if, indeed, his whole existence be not transmuted into that of the cold stone. On this theory each individual must, in absolute verity, be a being of one work, and a man of one idea.[1]

7. The theory errs in viewing causality only in the physical world, and not in the *mental*. According to Hamilton's system, we attribute the various mental phenomena to a distinct individual, which we call mind. Let us, then, apply his doctrine of causality in this instance. We are conscious of some mental phenomenon. According to this doctrine, we must not only think of it as existing, but it is even impossible for us to be conscious of it beginning to exist. Is this true? I more than doubt it, but let us follow the author in the proof. He says, we must be conscious of the phenomenon existing in time, and we cannot conceive a time in which it did

[1] On this theory how can we account for the cause of motion? When we see a wheel moving, out of what is the motion evolved?—out of the previous state of rest?

not exist. I have already pointed out what I consider the fallacy in this, and it were easy to do so now; but, for the sake of argument, let the assertion be admitted. Let it be granted, that we cannot conceive a time when this phenomenon did not exist, though it seems to me that the statement is plainly contradictory. We are conscious of the phenomenon coming into existence in the mind at the present time. Where was it before? Was it in the mind, though not in consciousness? Have we been wrong in considering that the phenomena rising in consciousness are newly originated existences? Did these phenomena all exist in the mind before? This were indeed a transcendent doctrine of "innate ideas." We fear, that this would be a proud assertion of human wisdom, rather than, what its author so appropriately designs his doctrine to be, "a discipline of humility." But, the author says somewhat of *causes* for every effect; if, then, the mental phenomenon be the perception of an external object, as for example, a stone; did that mental phenomenon find previous existence in the stone? If this be true, there may yet be hope for a system of Materialism.

8. On the hypothesis of a *First* cause, and the application of the theory to the work of creation, it involves a system of Pantheism. It may seem strange, yet it is not the less true, that, at one extreme, Hamilton's theory makes the Infinite such an abstraction as to render the whole creation impossible; and, at the other extreme, by implication, identifies the whole creation with God, and thus finishes in Pantheism. If extremes meet, it is with terrible inconsistency that they do so in the present in-

stance. No one, however, will for a moment suppose that I mean to affirm that Sir W. Hamilton was a believer in Pantheism. The illustrious thinker, in my humble opinion, often bowed to the authority of a belief really in advance of his theories. Most assuredly he had not in his mind a single trace of sympathy with Pantheism. Nevertheless, it seems to me that his doctrine involves the assertion that we are necessitated to think of the creation in accordance with the Pantheistic theory; in other words, that Pantheism, as a necessity of our consciousness, is, for us at least, true philosophy. I fear it must now be added, that Dr. Mansel has unfortunately drawn out a course of argument tending in the same direction, inasmuch as more than once he presents Pantheism on the one hand, and Atheism on the other, as the only alternatives open for our choice, if we attempt to reason concerning the origin of finite existence. I certainly agree with those who insist upon the weakness of the human mind; but I do not believe that the limits assigned to the mind are such as, in any one instance, to necessitate a false conclusion, that is, a conclusion antagonistic to the necessary belief implanted in our nature. Were this the case, it would involve an admission, which may be expressed in the language of reprobation applied to certain theories by Sir W. Hamilton, that God had made "our nature a lie."

After Hamilton has stated that our mode of thinking of a cause for any effect is by thinking of the effect as previously existing under another form, he says: "We cannot conceive, either, on the one hand, nothing becoming something, or, on the other, something becoming nothing.

When God is said to create the universe out of nothing, we think this by supposing that *He evolves the universe out of himself.*"[1] Such is his doctrine on this point, and such, I am sorry to add, is also the doctrine of M. Cousin. They both present this assertion in reference to the manner in which we think of the act of creation, and thus equally maintain that we can in thought realize the act of creation only in accordance with the Pantheistic system; in other words, that Pantheism is the transcript of our consciousness, and, therefore, true philosophy. Every one will be ready to accept M. Cousin's indignant disclaimer of Pantheism, as presented in the Second Edition of his *Philosophical Fragments*, in reply to some of his opponents, and to admire the earnestness of it. Certainly I do not think that a personal belief in Pantheism is to be attributed either to Sir William Hamilton or to M. Cousin. But it seems to me that their theories, nevertheless, lead to Pantheism.

It would have been gratifying, had I seen sufficient grounds to warrant it, in deference to the opinion expressed first by Professor Fraser,[2] and thereafter by Dr. Mansel,[3] to withdraw the assertion that Hamilton's reasoning leads logically to a Pantheistic conclusion. But, after careful reconsideration, I cannot see any escape from such a result, when it is maintained that creation adds nothing to existence. Take an example of Sir W. Hamilton's mode of dealing with the matter: "You can conceive the creation of a world as lightly as you can conceive the creation of an atom. But what is a creation?

[1] *Discussions*, p. 585.
[2] *Essays*, p. 237.
[3] *Metaphysics*, p. 272.

It is not the springing of nothing into something. Far from it; it is conceived, and is by us conceivable merely as the evolution of a *new form* of existence, by the fiat of the Deity. Let us suppose the very crisis of creation. Can we realize it to ourselves, in thought, that the moment after the universe came into *manifested* being, there was *a larger complement of existence* in the universe and its Author together, than there was the moment before, in the Deity himself alone? This we cannot imagine." I do not find in such a passage as this, any evidence of Professor Fraser's statement that Sir W. Hamilton "expressly confines the application of his hypothesis to *finite* causation."

In reply to the generally accepted declaration, that in the act of creation God created all things out of nothing, Sir W. Hamilton says, "We cannot conceive nothing becoming something." This every one will admit, but the first half of the assertion really embraces the whole truth in it, when it is said that "we cannot conceive nothing." To think of nothing is not to think at all. When we are able to think of nothing, it may be time enough to inquire whether it be possible to think of nothing *becoming* something. I do not suppose any man would say that the act of creation is construed in thought by thinking of something *evolved out of* nothing. The absurdity of such a statement is manifest, and by what ever method the act of creation is conceived, it is at once admitted that it cannot be in this manner.

Does, then, Hamilton's theory give the true account of the manner in which we think of the act of creation? He says: "When God is said to create the universe out

of nothing, we think this by supposing that He evolves the universe out of himself." Is this the manner in which we think of the creation? I most distinctly deny it. Anything more thoroughly inconsistent with the actual form of our thought there could not be, than to say that we think of the creation as evolved out of God; that we think of these mountains and valleys, these rocks and rivers, the beasts of the field, the birds of the air, the fish of the sea, as evolved out of God, and therefore previously existing in God, and now part of God. This universe evolved out of God! Anything more unsatisfactory as an explanation of the mode in which the mind attempts to realize the act of creation could not have been suggested. Better far that it had been declared a mental impossibility to conceive a creative act, than that anything should have been proposed so insufficient, and fitted to mislead, as the statement that we conceive of the work of creation by thinking of the universe as evolved out of the Divine nature. It was necessary for Sir W. Hamilton to make such an assertion in order to save his theory of causality; but it was dangerous to test the validity of the theory at such a point; the assertion of it here is a fatal error, certain to insure its universal rejection. It requires no reasoning or demonstration to establish its falsity. It requires only to be stated and brought into contrast with our consciousness in order to show that it cannot be maintained. Let us imagine that we stand at the point of creation, and perceive the material universe dart into existence. We are conscious of the origin of this new existence. We necessarily believe that it had a cause,

--that some operating power has brought it into being. But do we believe that this material substance previously existed in the cause? Do we believe that the cause is *material?* The testimony of our consciousness distinctly contradicts such a statement. But, by way of shutting us up to the theory, it is argued that we cannot conceive nothing becoming something. Certainly not, for that were to think nothing, which is impossible. But, it is added, "Creation is conceived, and is by us conceivable, only as the evolution of existence from possibility into actuality, by the fiat of the Deity." "The evolution of existence from possibility into actuality!" "*Existence*" is nothing, except an individual existence be indicated. In this case, therefore, it is either nothing, or it is the material universe itself. It cannot be the universe, for that has just begun; and if it be not that, it is nothing, and to talk of its evolution is absurd. But, granting that it is the material universe, if it be the evolution of that universe, whence is it evolved? From "possibility," says Sir W. Hamilton. And where is that? This is a use of general terms altogether unsatisfactory. If the meaning be, that in creation God put forth into action or "actuality," the power to create, which He previously possessed the "possibility" of doing, it expresses a doctrine sufficiently correct, were it not for the accompanying assertion that God exercises this power by *evolving* the universe out of Himself. This expression, however, gives it an entirely different aspect. Applying the phraseology to second causes, it would be said that the formation of a steam-engine "is the evolution of existence from possibility into actuality." In this case

it is quite true that the man had previously the ability to make an engine, and the materials had the capability of being made into an engine, but out of what was the engine evolved? Out of the materials certainly, and not out of the man. Where, then, were the *materials* out of which God evolved the universe? There were none; therefore, in the work of creation we cannot talk of the *evolution* of the created object. Were I to express what I hold to be our mode of thinking or imagining the work of creation, I should say that creation is conceived, and is by us conceivable, only as *the origin of finite existence*, by the power of the Deity. We think of the *fact* of the existence of the universe whenever it springs into being, but it is beyond our ability to understand *how* it began to be. From the existing universe we rise to a conception of God. We thus think of the world as existing in time up to the point of creation; and if, in thought, we pass beyond that, the world as the one term of the relation is dropped, that is to say, we withdraw our thoughts from it, and in this manner it ceases to be an object of thought, while God is contemplated as existing alone. On these grounds, we say that creation is the origin of finite existence by the fiat of the Deity.

To such a statement as the above Sir W. Hamilton replies, that we cannot conceive of the origin of existence, therefore we must think that the universe previously existed in God, since it did not previously exist in a created form. Now, it is admitted, that we can think of, or imagine, the universe as beginning to exist in its present form. What is there, then, which necessitates

us to believe that it previously existed in another form? We feel no such necessity. But, says Sir W. Hamilton, we cannot think of a time when it did not exist, that is, a time when there was nothing, that is to say, no created existence. To this I reply, that while we cannot imagine a time when nothing existed, yet we can easily think of a time when the world did not exist—a time when God alone existed. I have already shown, that time is the consciousness of succession in thought, and that we cannot think, without thinking of an object existing *in* time. When we think of the universe existing in time, it is impossible to drop the one term of the relation, namely, the universe, and think of time apart from any object. By a necessity of our nature, this is impossible. But this does not render it impossible for us to think of a time when the world did not exist, and when God alone existed. In the one case, we conceive of the universe and the Deity existing together; in the other, we think of God existing alone before the universe, but there is *no* mental necessity to think, much less to believe, that "the sum of existence" in the one instance, is *identical* with "the sum of existence" in the other. There is, therefore, no mental necessity to think that the universe was evolved out of God. In direct antagonism to the doctrine of Sir W. Hamilton, I hold that there is a mental necessity to believe that the material universe could not have previously existed as part of the Great Spirit.

Let us attempt to imagine the work of creation, and mark the facts of consciousness, which arise in making the attempt. We imagine the universe beginning to exist, that is to say, its existence is contemplated as a

present phenomenon. We then endeavour to satisfy our mind concerning the inquiry, *how* did it come into existence? A little reflection is enough to prove that the method in which the effect is produced does not belong to our observation, and is, therefore, beyond the range of our speculation. To attempt to answer the question, were to violate the first principle of sound philosophy. All that we can affirm is, that we contemplate the world springing into existence, and we think of an operating power, the Great First Cause, as producing it. We thus consider the universe a new existence—*really an increase in the sum of being.* It is of no avail to tell us that we cannot go back in thought to a time when there was no existence. When we are asked to think of the time before a certain house was erected, we conceive of that time, simply by thinking of events which occurred, or of objects which existed, before that house was built. So it is with the Creation; we think of the time when the world did not exist, by thinking of the time when God alone existed. We have no more difficulty in thinking of a time when the world did not exist, than in thinking of a time when a house did not exist. Nor need any difficulty be raised in reference to the possibility of our conception of God as He existed before the creation, since Hamilton's own theory implies such a conception. If, as he says, we think of the world as evolved out of God, it is plainly implied that we think of God as previously existent. I certainly admit that we cannot understand *how* God operates without materials, for we have no experience of *such* an exertion of causal energy; but we think of God as the cause which produces the effect; and we have no

difficulty in thinking of the object as beginning to exist. A greater absurdity there could not be, than the assertion that God separated from himself a part of His essence, and so operated upon it as to produce the universe. Hamilton himself recognises this, when he speaks of the creation of the universe, as its evolution from *possibility* into *actuality*. This is a quiet admission that it did not previously exist, but that there was previously in God the power to produce it; which is a very different doctrine, indeed, from that involved in the assertion, that we conceive of the act of creation by supposing that God "evolves the universe out of himself."

When, therefore, it is said that God made all things out of nothing, it is not meant that nothing became something. It is meant that God operated *without materials*, and that the world was originated by an act of power. *Ex nihilo, nihil fit*, is either a truth or a falsehood according to the relation in which it is taken. If by it be meant that nothing cannot become something, it is true. If by it be meant that God cannot without materials originate a new existence, it is false.

To direct Hamilton's words against his own doctrine, it may be said,--"On his theory, God is not distinct from the world; the creature is a *modification* of the Creator." "On this hypothesis, one of two alternatives must be admitted;" God must "pass either from the better to the worse, or from the worse to the better," both of which are absurd.

9. On this theory, the conception of a First Cause is an impossibility. It has been shown that, on the *hypothesis* of a First Cause, the theory is pantheistic, but

even that hypothesis is altogether inconsistent with the theory. In the theory of Sir W. Hamilton, the notion of a First Cause is a *borrowed* conception. Its author speaks of the universe as evolved out of God, but how has he obtained the conception of God, or of a First Cause? Not in accordance with his own theory, most certainly. According to that, the causal judgment arises from the fact that "we are constrained to think, that what now appears to us under a new form, had previously an existence under others." Now, if we account for a new appearance by thinking of it as it previously existed, we must again account for that previous existence by thinking of it as having existed under a different form at a time still more antecedent, and so on for ever. On this theory, we are dealing with a constant chain of causes, without the possibility of reaching an absolute cause; we are engaged upon the ever-varying forms of existence, without the possibility of reaching absolute existence. Suppose, then, that the point is reached at which the universe is created; according to the theory under consideration, we think that the universe previously existed under a different form. Now, if this be all that is involved in our conception of the cause of the world, for aught we know, that form may also be the result of a change, and the previous form may also have been the result of a change, and so on for ever. The alleged necessity for thinking of a present existence as previously existing under a different form, can never give the necessity for thinking of an original and absolute existence. How, then, does Sir William obtain the conception of that First Cause, from whom all things are said to have

been evolved? Not in accordance with his own theory assuredly. He can reach it only by reverting to the notion of a First Cause as a necessary conviction of the mind, and thus must overturn his whole theory. That we have a necessary knowledge and conception of a First Cause, we consider the true doctrine; but of this hereafter.

For the reasons thus stated, I consider that Sir W. Hamilton's theory of causality does not account for the phenomenon, and is altogether unsatisfactory. Considerable space has been occupied in discussing this question, but it was deemed necessary, inasmuch as the theory of the causal judgment concerns the true account of our notion of God as the great First Cause.

Other objections might have been presented, but I have already dwelt at sufficient length on the matter. For example, it might have been remarked that Sir William's theory *erroneously* professes to be based upon a *weakness* of the mind. Does it prove weakness of mind, that in order to think, we must think of *something existing?* Does it prove weakness of mind that we cannot think of *nothing?* What a *power* of mind it would be to be able *to think of nothing;* to think and yet not to think! To think, and to think of existence, are convertible terms; and is not *thought* precisely the *power* of the mind?

The doctrine of causality which I adopt, is in the main that held by the majority of modern philosophers, though it may be with some variations in the manner of statement and in the mode of defence. The doctrine is this: That it is a necessary condition of human intelligence —a first principle of the mind—to believe in, and there-

fore to think of, a cause for *every finite existence.* I do not merely say, in the language of some, "that whatever *begins* to exist, must have a cause which produced it." While accepting this as involved in the causal judgment, I do not regard it as a full expression of the law of causality. Though it is true, that we believe there must be a cause for every new appearance, it is also true that the mind is necessitated to believe that there is a cause for every finite existence, even though we should not recognise it beginning to exist. By the law of causality, we are not only necessitated to think of a cause for every object which we recognise as *beginning* to exist; but we are also necessitated to believe that every finite object which we recognise *as existing,* must have begun to exist, and must have had a cause for so beginning. The world in which we live is not brought under our observation as beginning to exist, yet we necessarily believe that it did begin to exist, and that it was the operation of a cause which realized its origin. I consider that the law of causality cannot be carefully analysed, without the discovery of the fact that essentially, and at its root, it is a testimony to the existence of the Infinite First Cause. At the same time, in harmony with the consciousness of power in ourselves, it involves the belief in a cause for every new appearance, which, if carried out in its full application, leads back at length to the Divine Originator. I hold, therefore, that to think of a cause for every finite existence is a necessary condition of human intelligence, a first principle of the mind, an ultimate datum of consciousness, which cannot be demonstrated, yet cannot be doubted, but must be accepted by all men.

In reference to this theory Sir William says, that it "certainly does account for the phenomenon." Since, therefore, I consider that the causal judgment is necessary to all men, and that all other theories, Sir William's included, have failed to account for the phenomenon, I maintain the theory now stated as fully accounting for the phenomenon, and as the only tenable theory on the question.

Notwithstanding, however, Sir W. Hamilton's admission of the sufficiency of the theory, he urges against it one or two objections, a reply to which I feel constrained to attempt.

The first objection is stated in the following terms: "If there be postulated an express and positive affirmation of intelligence to account for the mental deliverance, —that existence cannot absolutely commence; we must equally postulate a counter affirmation of intelligence, positive and express, to explain the counter mental deliverance,—that existence cannot infinitely not commence. . . . But they are contradictories; and, as contradictories, they cannot both be true. On this theory, therefore, the root of our nature is a lie."[1] To this I reply that I do not admit the existence of any such contradiction in our nature. I deny the existence of any such thing as a "mental deliverance, that existence cannot absolutely commence," if by "existence" here, be meant *finite* existence. Upon ground already stated, I altogether deny that our notion of causality is convertible with the thought of continued existence, or with the belief that every object which we recognise as beginning

[1] *Discussions*, p. 595.

to exist, must have previously existed under a different form. I therefore altogether reject the asserted "mental deliverance, that existence cannot absolutely commence." It is no part of the theory here defended, consequently I am not chargeable with the inconsistency of holding both contradictories. I hold it as a mental deliverance that all finite existence did absolutely begin to exist, that nothing but God has had infinite existence, or, in the more awkward language of the quotation, "that finite existence cannot infinitely not commence." I do assert the fact of two mental deliverances, involved in the causal judgment, but certainly not of two which are mutually contradictory. They are these:—*First*, That there is a cause for the existence of every finite object in its present form: *Secondly*, That all finite existence had an absolute commencement,[1] that is, that there was a self-existent First Cause. These two are not contradictories; and against the doctrine which embraces these, the objection is inapplicable. If, however, the objection to Sir William's theory, indicated above, be admitted as valid, namely, that the necessity to think of existence is not a weakness, but a power, the present objection, which he urges against the theory here defended, turns with destructive effect upon his own, since he asserts that the two contradictories are both the deliverances of consciousness.

The next objection is expressed thus,—"To suppose a positive and special principle of causality, is to suppose

[1] By "*absolute commencement*," I mean the origin of being without previously existing materials; not origin without dependent relation on a cause. The former I regard as Sir William's meaning; on any other supposition, the asserted contradiction vanishes.

that there is expressly revealed to us, through intelligence, an affirmation of the fact that there exists no free causation ; that is, there is no cause which is not itself merely an effect, existence being only a series of determined antecedents and determined consequents."[1] Does then the doctrine which makes the causal judgment a principle of intelligence, imply a denial of free will ? I am persuaded that it does not. Let us examine our consciousness, and ascertain what facts are therein presented. We are conscious of an act of volition. In accordance with the theory here advocated, we necessarily refer this phenomenon to a certain power which we call Mind. Some may say that it is referred to the power of will as its cause. But it is to be remembered that the division of the powers of the mind is merely theoretical, and instituted for philosophical purposes. These powers are not separate existences. When we speak of the various faculties of the mind, we mean thus to indicate only the several relations in which the mind can operate. When, therefore, we are conscious of an act of will, we refer it to some cause, and that cause we call Mind. Is then the mind, as a personal existence, distinct from the successive states of consciousness, itself an effect ? Yes. It was created by God. Does this involve the impossibility of freedom, that is to say, of the mind having been created a free cause ? I recognise no such impossibility. We are conscious of an act of volition, by which we mean, that we are conscious of coming to a certain determination by our own personal choice ; and we refer that volition to a

[1] *Discussions*, p. 595.

cause which we call mind; but, in so doing, there is nothing fatal to the freedom of the mind. There is no difficulty in thinking of the act of volition as a new existence, which did in consciousness absolutely begin to exist; and we have no difficulty in believing, nay rather, we are conscious, that the mind was the originating power. So essentially is this the case, that we hold ourselves responsible for our personal determinations. I acknowledge the necessity for referring the phenomenon to a cause; but I recognise no necessity for affirming that the cause of the phenomenon was another previously existing phenomenon; and so on *ad infinitum*. Such "a series of determined antecedents and determined consequents" would be essential, in order to establish Necessity or Fatalism, and invalidate Freedom, but consciousness reveals no such series.

Let us, however, hear Sir W. Hamilton again on this point. He says: "Moral liberty does not merely consist in the power of *doing what we will*, but in the power of *willing what we will*. For a power over the determinations of our Will, supposes an act of Will, that our Will should determine so and so; for we can only freely exert power through a rational determination or volition."[1] Now, what is meant by "willing to will?" Was any one ever conscious of this, of willing to will what he wills? No man ever was, or ever could be. And if no one is conscious of it, by what right is it affirmed that such a series is necessary in order to exercise volition? We are not at all conscious of willing to will, in order to that freedom of will of which we are conscious. Look again

[1] Reid's *Works*, p. 599.

at Sir William's statement. He says, "We can only freely exert power through volition." If, then, we freely exert power through volition, the act of volition is itself a free exertion of power, and no previous act of volition is necessary to secure freedom. If, as is asserted, we *freely exert power through volition*, it is utterly ridiculous to affirm, that for the free exertion of power in volition, we require a previous act of volition. This objection, therefore, entirely breaks down, while the theory of causality stands uninjured, and presents no obstacles to freedom of will.

Having thus essayed a vindication of the doctrine of causality, here maintained, from the assaults of Sir W. Hamilton, I shall now briefly state M. Cousin's opinion in reference to our notion of God as First Cause. His assertion is, that we think of God not only as a cause, but as an *absolute* cause, by which he means, a cause which *must* act. According to his theory, it is not merely a fact that God has put forth causal energy in the act of creation, and that He now exists as the cause of every other existence; but, by the very constitution of His nature, God was *necessitated* to put forth causal energy, or, in his own language, was necessitated to "pass into act." According to this doctrine, therefore, God was not merely *able* to create, but *necessitated* to create: Creation was a necessary act.[1] In defence of such a doctrine nothing can be said. When we consider the influence of the transcendental philosophy upon M.

[1] According to M. Cousin's doctrine, God *must* act as a cause. According to Sir William's doctrine God *cannot* act as a cause, for the unconditioned cannot exist in relation. Both are vicious extremes. Sir W. Hamilton has challenged the statement. For his criticism, and my reply, see Appendix A.

Cousin, it is not difficult to understand how he was led to propound a doctrine so untenable. Attracted by the beauties of German transcendentalism, yet painfully conscious of certain marks of failure, he sought to obliterate the defects, and, by a few clever touches, to fill in the parts in a manner conformable with the whole. But, woe to the efforts of Eclecticism! What had been professedly improved, had only been made worse than before. It is unnecessary to dwell upon this error of M. Cousin, which is only one of many faults into which he seems to have been led by too ardent admiration of a system. The doctrine has been demolished by Sir William Hamilton with a master's hand. Never was artillery more powerful, directed with more terrible effect.

In passing from the opinion of M. Cousin, I proceed to the completion of the purpose of the present Chapter. I have said that, by a first principle of our mind, we necessarily think of a cause for every finite existence. Do we, then, think of every such existence as a mere link in an *eternal* chain of causes? We do not. Without reasoning upon the matter, the mind instinctively perceives the absurdity of such an assertion. While the general principle that there is a cause for every finite existence is implanted in the mind as a native possession, there is placed along with it, as a necessary principle of the mind, the revelation of one Being, the Cause of all causes, himself uncaused. No man, who even cursorily reflects upon his own consciousness, can assert that these two principles are unknown to him. I do not intend to dwell here at great length upon the position of Atheism, in denying the existence of God. Atheism is a lie in the

utterance, and a lie against the clearest of all evidence —the consciousness of one's own mind. Let a man examine his consciousness, and say if he do not find there the necessary beliefs, that there must be a cause for every event, and that there must be a First Cause for every finite existence. Any man who examines his own consciousness, will find these principles in his mind, and though he cannot begin to demonstrate their truth, he cannot doubt their authoritative testimony.

Upon any other ground than that of a necessary principle of the mind, these words were open to the charge of dogmatism; but, with that foundation, they are the simple expression of the authoritative nature of an *à priori* principle.[1]

Let us examine our consciousness, and attempt clearly to delineate the facts revealed. The mind thinks of the wide world, on whose broad surface we seem so small—of the high towering rocks, which, in dread silence, stand as tokens that man below and they above are equally subject to a higher power—of the vast expanse of waters, by some mysterious tie hung freely in the hollows of the earth—of the host of stars, midst which our world is but

1 When I speak of a necessary principle of the mind, as the only ground which warrants uncompromising assertion, apart from demonstration, I mean in the sphere of mental philosophy, which finds all its materials in the revelations of consciousness. And why do these necessary principles of the mind stand supreme and beyond the reach of dispute? Because they are implanted in the mind by God—they are a direct revelation from God. May we not, then, have other facts of equal certainty, otherwise revealed? Undoubtedly. The facts of an external revelation, in other words, the facts of Scripture are such. These two, the facts of the internal revelation, that is to say, the necessary principles of the mind, and the facts of the external revelation, that is to say, the truths of the Bible, we may maintain with uncompromising steadfastness, apart from all demonstration. They are both the revelations of God. The singular harmony, and mutual adaptation of these two, seems to me to present strong evidence of the Divine origin of the Scriptures—a course of proof which might be developed with great advantage to the Christian evidences.

a speck—of that mysterious power by which the earth is rent and made to quake—of the shade which creeps athwart the central luminary, and, with a power beyond our control, wraps us in thick darkness. By a necessity of our nature, we must believe that all these had a cause. But, was that cause itself an effect? and, if so, must we go back in a regressive process from effect to cause, never coming to an end? This is an absurdity which cannot recommend itself to our reason. Let us endeavour to realize an unending chain, in which each cause is itself an effect, developed by some previously originated cause, and we shall fail. Let us endeavour to imagine an eternal chain of causes—a succession of operating powers, without some originating power, and we shall find that we not only cannot realize such a thing, but we cannot believe in its existence, inasmuch as it is in direct violation of a necessary conviction of our mind. A course of operations without an originating power;—a process of development without some beginning of the process,—is necessarily regarded by us as an impossibility. It is the acknowledged necessity of the human mind to believe in some uncreated source, as the Origin of all things. We find, then, these two necessary convictions both involved in the conviction of causality, as a ruling principle of our intelligence: that there is a cause for the existence of every finite object in its present form; and that there is a primary Cause for the origin of all finite existence. On the one hand, we cannot believe in an unending regression of finite causes. The attempt is felt to involve something antagonistic to our nature—something which our constitution stamps as impossible. On the other

hand, we have a necessary belief, which establishes positive truth, and which affirms that there is an uncreated Infinite Being, who by His own power originated all things. The testimony of such an original conviction must be accepted. We may wish that it were false; by vainly directing the mind to curious speculation, we may turn our attention from it; but, while we endeavour to account to ourselves for the origin of all finite things, we must believe in an infinite and eternal Creator. We must repose in the existence of a primary Cause for all finite causes; an unbeginning Origin of all finite existence; a central Power from which comes all the restricted activity of creation; an everlasting Fountain of Life, from which flows all vitality, which is recognised existing in limited forms.

Such is the revelation of consciousness, in presenting which, exclusive attention has been given to the internal phenomena, regardless of the objections which may be urged against the statement of their nature. It may, however, be asserted, that all this is a fabrication. In answer to such an assertion, I can only ask each one to examine his own consciousness; to attempt satisfactorily to account to his own mind for the origin of all things; and he will find that he instinctively rests in the existence of an uncreated Power, as the originator of everything limited. Are we asked whether we have forgotten that there are men who assert that there was no First Cause? I admit that there are such men. As there have been men who have denied the existence of the external world, so there have been men who, admitting its existence, have denied that of a First Cause.

Men have theoretically maintained that there is no universe, and have yet confessed that they found themselves necessitated to believe in its existence. And so men have denied the existence of a First Cause—have theoretically maintained that there is no such Being—and have accomplished this simply by withdrawing their attention from facts, and fixing it upon the forms of a theory. But this I must take leave to say of such men, that if they were as honest as the former class, they would admit that they feel themselves practically necessitated to believe in the reality of the First Cause, whose existence they theoretically deny. Let a man refuse to turn his attention to the facts of the question, and he may maintain anything to his own satisfaction, no matter how monstrous it may seem to others. Let him refuse to apply his mind to the circumstances in which the conviction described is said to arise; let him abide by his own peculiar forms of thought, and refuse to examine their foundation, and he may assert his unbelief with perfect satisfaction. But, let him theoretically maintain Atheism as he may, he cannot *live* consistently with his theory. If he be at all a reflective man, the inquiry must often arise in his mind, whence came I, and whence have come all these objects around me? And, with such thoughts, he will find the truth pressed upon him, however anxious he be to escape from it. The voice of consciousness saith, that there was an Infinite and Eternal Creator of all finite things. Man may rush from the truth, or stifle the inquiry, or escape from it by turning his thoughts to other objects. But, if he raise the inquiry at all, as he is a living, intelligent being, with

the soul of humanity within him, and possessed of all its principles, he must believe.

The upholder of Atheism will observe that I do not profess to *prove* the existence of a First Cause. I do not attempt to *demonstrate* such a fact. I maintain that it is above proof — that it is beyond all demonstration; capable of being neither doubted nor demonstrated, but a truth necessary to the mind. It is not, indeed, a truth always present to the mind—not a truth which cannot be shunned; but a truth which must be admitted if we seek to account to ourselves for the origin of all finite things. It is a principle which, when raised in the mind, cannot be doubted, but from its very nature stands unquestionable. I do not uphold the argument from design as a demonstration logically exact. On the contrary, we never can have a logical demonstration of the existence of God. The creation of the universe is only a finite manifestation of power, and from that we can never infer the Infinite. Every such argument is incompetent, as embracing more in the conclusion than is involved in the premises. I therefore do not profess to present any argument which will be a satisfactory demonstration of a First Cause; but no such profession is made, because I believe that, in every such attempted demonstration, the notion of the First Cause is involved in the very first step. All the use here made of what has been called the argument from design is as an illustration — as presenting a course of thought in which the conception of a First Cause is certain to arise—as originating an inquiry which, if prosecuted, must terminate in belief.

I hold, then, that a necessary conviction of a self-existent First Cause is an ultimate fact in consciousness. It is, therefore, involved in this conviction, that the First Cause is absolute and infinite, that is, essentially free from restriction such as could spring from the existence of any being external to Himself, and also essentially unlimited in His own nature. In this view of the Divine nature I understand Dr. Mansel to agree, and yet it is an argument upon which he lays much stress, that the Absolute cannot exist as cause. "A cause cannot, as such, be absolute; the Absolute cannot, as such, be a cause."[1] Now, if the Absolute be defined as "that which cannot exist in *any relation*," it is self-evident, that it cannot exist in the relation of cause. Under no other definition of the Absolute does Dr. Mansel's assertion admit of vindication, and in that case his statement refers to nothing, since there is no such Absolute. Most assuredly, this is not the Absolute which is acknowledged as the object of a necessary belief, and yet Dr. Mansel himself makes the above declaration concerning the impossibility of the Absolute, as such, being a cause. With him the First Cause is, "that which produces all things, and is itself produced of none;" the Absolute is "that which exists in and by itself, having no *necessary relation* to any other being." With these definitions I perfectly concur, but I am at a loss to perceive how, upon such definitions, the assertion was made, that "a Cause cannot, as such, be Absolute; the Absolute, as such, cannot be a Cause." Let us withdraw the words "Absolute" and "Cause," inserting in their place the above definitions, and

[1] *Limits of Religious Thought*, p. 47.

the affirmation is: "That which exists in and by itself, having no *necessary relation* to any other being," cannot be "that which produces all things, and is itself produced of none." Why not? It seems to me that the very reverse of this *must* be the truth. "That which exists in and by itself, having no necessary relation to any other being," *alone can be* "that which produces all things, and is itself produced of none." Dr. Mansel's own definitions overturn his statement.

It is very true, indeed, that any being can be regarded as a cause, only in so far as he exists in relation to an effect, but such relation is not necessary to the Self-existent One. It is confessedly true, in point of fact, that the Deity does exist in that relation to His creatures, but He is not necessarily a cause. In saying therefore, that "the cause as such *exists only* in relation to the effect," and applying that statement to the Absolute One, Dr. Mansel only perplexes the discussion needlessly, and misleads the mind. When applied to the Absolute One, the statement is equivalent simply to this: "That the Absolute Being exists in the relation of First Cause, only by his relation to His creatures;" which is a very simple and self-evident assertion, having none of the dreadful consequences in it which the author would lead his readers to suppose. While it is true that the Absolute Being is the First Cause, it is not held that He is *necessarily* a cause. It is simply affirmed that He does exist in the relation of Cause by the exercise of His power and wisdom; and we believe that the power and wisdom thus exercised belong to His necessary existence.

Again, I must submit, with all deference, that Dr.

Mansel only perplexes the discussion, and misleads the inquirer, without rendering the least perceptible service to us in our search after truth, when he speaks of the Infinite Being *becoming* a cause, and asks, "How can the Infinite *become* that which it *was not* from the first?" All agree in holding that the Infinite Being cannot become anything else than He has been—that from everlasting to everlasting He is unchangeable. And since this is a matter of necessary belief with all, it can be nothing else than *confusion of language* which seems to throw any doubt upon it. There is the clearest possible distinction between *acting* in a particular relation, and *becoming* something else in nature, or passing from one mode of being into another. To *become* something, is to change the nature; to *do* something, is to put forth power, while retaining the same nature. Before engaging in "word-juggling" with the verbs "to cause," and "to become," it behoved Dr. Mansel to show that, in acting as a cause, the nature of the efficient agent is changed, which he has not done, and cannot do. Every man knows that to put forth causal energy is not necessarily to change the nature, and he who argues as if change of being were necessarily involved in acting as cause, only *makes difficulties*, instead of helping to remove those which really exist. To argue as if causation were a "mode of existence," and not a mere relation, as if it implied the addition of a new attribute to the Absolute, or transition from one state to another, such as from "quiescence" to "activity," is in every way unwarrantable. Our knowledge of the Absolute is certainly obtained by the recognition of His existence in relation, but our

knowledge is one and does not recognise in any of the relations contemplated, any change in His nature. We may not be able to explain *how* God creates, but we necessarily *believe* that in creating there is no change in His existence, and all our *knowledge* of His nature, and all our *thought* concerning Him, harmonize with this belief.

If, then, it be true that we have a natural belief in a self-existent First Cause, and that all faith implies a measure of knowledge, inquiry remains to be made concerning the nature of the knowledge which we possess. In prosecuting such an inquiry, there are two questions requiring to be answered, What is our knowledge of a cause as such? and what is our knowledge of the First Cause?

When we perceive an event, for example, in the external world, we may at the same time observe the cause which produces the event. In such a case, our knowledge of the cause is our recognition of those characteristics of the object which imply *power* competent to produce the observed result. There may, however, be other qualities which go to make up the sum of being in the object, which is regarded by us as a *cause* in the particular relation at the time under our consideration. The object as a whole is certainly known, but this particular act of knowledge, in so far as it is distinctively the recognition of the object as cause, involves more expressly the cognition of those qualities which involve the power to produce the effect. In some cases, the cause of a particular occurrence may not be recognised, and the mind, guided by the native law of causality, not only believes in the existence of a cause, but, out of the materials of its own experience, imagines the particular nature of the cause, or adopts a

sufficient hypothesis, until the reality is discovered. In such a case there is only such knowledge of a cause as the nature of the effect, and the materials of personal experience in other cases, may afford. But the true knowledge of a cause springs from the recognised relation between the effect and the cause itself. Both effect and cause are known as objects presented to the mind, and our knowledge is the cognition of their relation.

In this way we have the knowledge of finite causes in operation around us, and the great law of causality necessarily involves the acknowledgment of a self-existent First Cause. Every finite cause either leads at once to the First Cause, or is a link in the chain of causes which guides the mind at length to the Absolute Being, according to the nature of the exercise in which human intelligence is engaged. It is impossible to explain the being of an individual existence, except by a reference to the Eternal One. On the other hand, if we perceive or suppose that a certain cause has been itself modified by some previously existing cause, and that again by another, we cannot believe that there is an unending chain of such finite causes. We must repose at last in the existence of a Being possessed of infinite power ; that is, whose power is not limited by any other power, but who is the source of all finite causation.

While, then, all finite existence conducts the mind to the self-existent Being, we have in the works of creation a relative manifestation of the power, wisdom, and goodness of that Being. Such being the case, it is as certain that we can attain to a knowledge, in some measure at least, of the Deity, as First Cause, as that we do possess

a knowledge of His works. With a fundamental belief in His existence, which of itself implies such a recognition of His nature as His works could not give, the contemplation and study of these works must, by the laws of mind, unfold within us the original knowledge we have received. The forms of existence in this finite universe are the facts which require explanation, and such explanation can be obtained only in and through the deliverance of an original belief, which again implies an original *knowledge*, capable of opening indefinitely in consciousness, according to the demands of our intelligence. It will therefore be observed that there can be no knowledge of a self-existent cause, except through an original belief, and that such knowledge cannot arise in consciousness, or be developed there, without the contemplation of the Divine works. In other words, the Infinite Being can be known only in relation, and our knowledge of Him as First Cause is possible only in the recognition of the relation He bears to His works.

That we have a *belief* in the infinite First Cause, is a fact universally admitted among philosophers, however they differ concerning the origin of such belief; but, what is here maintained, in opposition to Sir W. Hamilton and Dr. Mansel, is that we have, and must have, a *knowledge* of the First Cause, in whose existence we believe. I hold that if, for explanation of finite existence we repose by faith in the existence of an Infinite and Absolute Being, the necessary laws of our intelligence imply that we must have a knowledge of the nature of that Being. And if there be any such knowledge, it must be a knowledge of the Deity both positive and real,

certainly not merely negative, nor simply regulative. If there be any knowledge of the Infinite One, it must be a knowledge of His real nature, since a knowledge of Him *by what he is not*, is no knowledge whatever, and is regulatively useless, as it is actually nothing.

That there is a positive knowledge of the First Cause, seems to me one of the most manifest facts in consciousness. Lying in close and necessary connexion are these two facts, which it is essential to distinguish:—(*a.*) a *knowledge* of the works of the Deity apart from their relation to the Creator; and (*b.*) a *belief* in the existence of the Infinite Creator. But these two facts do not embrace the entire results of the analysis of consciousness. There is a third fact, quite as certain and clear as the two just named,—(*c.*) that we have a knowledge of the Infinite Being, who is the object of faith. This fact, which I hope to establish by a reference to operations of mind patent to all, cannot by any possibility be confounded with the knowledge of the works of God, nor can it be confounded with our faith. The most important point, therefore, is to mark the difference between the fact I seek to point out, and the belief in the Divine existence. This is to be done by indicating the distinctive characteristics of faith and knowledge. Faith is the *conviction* that an infinitely powerful, wise, and good Being exists; knowledge is the recognition which the mind obtains of the nature, harmony, and operations of these attributes. Faith is complete and final whenever it arises in the mind, knowledge is capable of expansion; faith is the same at every moment, knowledge is progressive; faith is the same whether it arise in con-

sciousness to account for the existence of a blade of grass or of a world, knowledge expands according to the study of the works of the Creator.

With these distinctive characteristics of faith and knowledge presented to view, I ask whether it is true that the Infinite Being is only the object of *faith?* Is there no other exercise of mind concerning God, save that which is complete and final, and which is therefore the same at every moment, whether we contemplate the smallest herb or the wide universe? I confess it impossible for me to see how an adequate record of the facts of consciousness can be attempted without acknowledging that, besides the permanent and uniform conviction of the existence of the Infinite Being, there is another exercise of mind concerning God, which is continually enlarging, as the result of our patient and reverential contemplation of His works. Here inquiry, research, and contemplation are all possible, and as the result of these, the mind finds itself possessed of a more complete acquaintance with the Divine nature than before. This is *knowledge.* And such knowledge, in its very least measure, is in harmony with our faith, and, so far, a knowledge of the Infinite Being as He is. Knowledge by its expansion is coming near to fill up the measure of faith, though it be true, as I hold it is, that the spheres of the two will never be co-extensive. But if any one would deny that such knowledge is a cognition of the Infinite Being as He really is, he must prove that it is knowledge which is not acquired under the guidance of faith, which, I submit, cannot be done.

That this knowledge is really a knowledge of the

Infinite Being, may, I think, be made manifest. Though the *works* of the Deity are limited, we do not recognise anything which bears the least trace of His power having been retarded or obstructed, but quite the reverse. Our *observation* is limited at every point as we advance, and our knowledge is consequently limited; but however far it extend, there is no recognition of even the shadow of limitation. Notwithstanding these facts, that His works are limited, and that our knowledge is limited, we cannot even *imagine* or suppose that He is finite. We cannot assign the *boundaries of our knowledge* to the nature of the Deity, for we are conscious of nothing more decidedly than this, that the knowledge which recognises limits in the object, is not a knowledge of the First Cause. If it were attempted, even by a mental experiment, to impute limits to the Being who is contemplated as the cause of the universe, we should acknowledge at once that this restricted Being is not the First Cause. Our knowledge, unfolding as it does by the contemplation of the relative testimony of our faith, and the illustration of the Divine works, is essentially a knowledge of the Infinite Being as He really exists. That knowledge is not obtained by a consideration of the testimony of our faith alone, nor by an examination of the works of creation alone, but by a consideration of the relation of these two, that is, of the bearing of our faith on facts recognised. In this way, it appears, that the more we study the application of our fundamental belief to the complicated forms of existence presented in the universe, the more does our original knowledge of the self-existent Being open up in consciousness.

This knowledge of the First Cause is a *clear* knowledge, since it is the cognition of *power* which has produced the most stupendous results; of *wisdom*, which has employed the most ingenious and complicated contrivances for the attainment of desired ends; and of *goodness*, which has provided with profuse benevolence for the wants of every living thing. And, besides, this *clear* knowledge is also a *distinct* knowledge, in respect both of the recognised distinction between the attributes known and the form of knowledge itself. In the whole circle of knowledge otherwise obtained, we have no cognition of power, wisdom, or goodness which admits of the least comparison with these attributes as we know them to exist in the Deity. And in no other instance are we conscious of attaining to a knowledge of existence under the guidance of a necessary belief testifying to the infinite perfection of the Being. We are thus able to discriminate this knowledge from every other knowledge by marks of distinction the most broad and easily recognised.

While, however, this knowledge is clear and distinct, it is always *inadequate*, and from the very nature of the mind must for ever continue to be so. Knowledge of the First Cause, however far it reaches, never involves the recognition of limits; on the contrary, it implies distinct consciousness of the impossibility of measuring the object by the cognitive power exercised upon it, or of attributing the limits of knowledge, to the existence of the object known. Knowledge, as has been stated, is progressive, but in advancing from stage to stage, and embracing still more within its sphere, there is never at

any point the slightest variation in the consciousness that our knowledge is far short of the object. We may dwell among the works of God, and contemplate them assiduously as displaying very marvellously the excellencies of the Great Creator; but, guided by the necessary belief in His infinite perfection, we never can, by any degree of progress, come to contemplate the fulness of His glory. How much our knowledge of His transcendent attributes may expand, every one knows who has concentrated the attention upon the revelation He has given of His nature, in the works of His hand. While the wonders of creation open to our admiring view, still greater wonders are found rising within the mind as our necessary recognition of the Deity unfolds, giving to the outer world a meaning which only those who study it to this end, can see; and clothing it with a grandeur, which nothing save the contemplation of its Creator could convey. Though the external works of creation, even in their grandest aspects, give but an imperfect illustration of the greatness of that God whose word ushered them into being; the mind, with its own special and richer treasure of faith, can advance indefinitely in the attainment of fresh knowledge, without finding the means of such progress fail.

What shall be the method of advancing our knowledge in a future state, is very faintly indicated to us; but our faith in the infinite excellence of the self existent Creator will abide as the inheritance of our mind; and the works to be contemplated there, however much more glorious than those spread out before us here,

as being still the works of the same God, will be in harmony with the illustration of the Divine nature, afforded to us in the creation contemplated now. And as it is self-evident that our knowledge and thought will still be regulated by all those mental laws which spring from the *limited* nature of created mind, it is manifest that, in the attainment of our knowledge of the Deity now, we are on the line along which we shall continue to advance throughout eternity, however much more rapid our progress, and magnificent the results of our study. If we tread a nobler world, if we listen with more rapturous delight to harmony more exquisite, if we hold converse with minds ennobled, our knowledge shall even then be only such knowledge as finite minds can have of an Infinite Creator.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE KNOWLEDGE OF THE INFINITE BEING IN THE RELATION OF MORAL GOVERNOR.

Man is not merely a being gifted with a power of reasoning, who pursues courses of elaborate investigation, and inquires into the origin of things. He is, indeed, attracted by the marvellous appearances of an external universe; by the wonders of vegetation, now retiring into dormant stillness, and again with new vigour stretching forth its arms to welcome the summer's sun, and move to the sweet music of the breezes; by the complicated organism of the animal creation; and by the huge masses of material form, rolling in the expanse of space. With feelings of admiration and awe, he beholds such objects, and rises from them to think of the Being from whom they came; and thus his mind comes into relation with the great First Cause,—with the wisdom which devised, with the power which created, with the might which sustains all things. While, however, this is one relation in which man comes into contact with the Infinite Being, it is not the only one. He has within his own mind, independently of everything else, a necessary knowledge of a Being infinite and supreme. Man is endowed with a moral nature, necessarily discriminating

between right and wrong, possessed of a conviction of moral obligation, conscious of merit and demerit, and therefore possessed of the knowledge of a supreme Moral Governor. The position which I maintain is, that in the moral nature of man, God has given a certain manifestation of His glory, which, when taken in relation with our belief in His perfect holiness, necessarily affords us a knowledge of His nature. And, still further, I affirm that man can be a moral being, only on the ground of a knowledge of the God who governs, and of the law according to which He governs.

There are in the mind many first principles which we cannot demonstrate, the truth of which we never thought of attempting to prove, and yet they are principles which we cannot doubt. Even from a logical point of view, it is manifest that this must be the case, for, since the act of reasoning is an act of comparison, it is plain that there must be certain fixed and original principles upon which comparison is instituted, and all reasoning proceeds. As truly as the stream must have a fountain, and the building a foundation, so must each mind have its fountain of truth, a blessed communication from the fountain of all truth ; so must each process of reasoning have in the mind a sure foundation, upon which the validity of the whole must be established.

Among these first principles we find some which mark off for themselves a peculiar sphere. They do not exist as the basis of intellectual truth ; they do not belong to the same sphere as those first principles which afford the criterion by which to test the validity of the operations and decisions of the judgment. They refer to

the actions of men, and find their application by viewing these actions in a peculiar relation. They do not distinguish the intellectually *true*, but the morally *good*. They are not concerned with what man *can know*, but with what man *ought to do*. Locke has said: "Whether there be any such moral principles wherein all men do agree, I appeal to any who have been but moderately conversant in the history of mankind, and looked abroad beyond the smoke of their own chimneys." This appeal I desire to meet in a way quite the reverse of that which a sensational philosophy represents as possible.

We find in consciousness the recognition of a peculiar quality as belonging to our actions. By the constitution of our nature, that is to say, by a necessity of our mind, we distinguish between the right and the wrong—between the morally good and the morally bad. If we are asked, what is this quality of goodness or badness in actions?—we cannot reply. A logical definition is impossible. We can find no answer except that we are conscious that certain actions are good, and others evil. Within the mind there is a standard by which we test our actions; conformity to this standard distinguishes an action as right; antagonism to this standard marks out the action as wrong. The principles which constitute this standard are implanted in our nature, and we admit them, for no other reason than that we must. They are part of our being, and we can no more deny them, than we can deny our own nature. It is true that they may not be recognised in the mind of each individual in a systematized order. The great majority of men, not being given to reflection upon their own consciousness, may have no

very distinct knowledge of their individual import, but their existence and authority are nevertheless tacitly acknowledged. In the ordinary experience of men, these principles lead to the discrimination of actions as morally right or wrong. Each man finds in himself the consciousness of the necessity to make this distinction, and he perceives its recognition on the part of all those who are around him. The principles of right and wrong are the spontaneous deliverances of the soul—the free utterances of our moral constitution.

The principles of morality are thus an essential part of our being, authoritative and final, and in no way dependent either upon individual experience, or upon external circumstances. They draw their entire authority from the Creator who implanted them in the mind. To deny this, were to overturn the foundation of all morality, and make an ethical system an impossibility. If there be no fixed principles, then, there can be no morality at all, and each man must be allowed to follow his inclination. On this supposition, there can be no uniform standard of right. An action will be approved of by some, while it is condemned by others, and pronounced a matter of total indifference by a third party. There can be no public opinion uniformly approving of one class of actions, and as uniformly condemning another; and men must fail to discover any fitness between action and punishment.

But things have not come to such a pass among men. Every individual is conscious of the exercise of judgment on moral actions, and if he observe and analyse these mental acts, he will find that they must be traced

to certain principles, which have always been believed, just because they must. Look around upon society, and the same fact is at once apparent. Notwithstanding that there are points of detail upon which men may differ, the great leading outlines of morality are so fixed and unwavering, that it is clearly manifest that there are certain universally admitted principles—certain necessary truths—constituting the basis of morality. Along with these principles of right and wrong, there is the consciousness of obligation to perform what is right, and to shun what is wrong; and both taken together, along with our belief in the perfectly holy Being, imply in the mind the knowledge of the Supreme Being, who has drawn the line between right and wrong, and to whom we are responsible.

Some, indeed, have maintained that the happiness or misery resulting from actions is that which determines their character, and that our moral judgments are based upon experience. Such a doctrine proceeds upon a very partial examination of human nature; it is glaringly one-sided, and self-destructive in its results.

Look at such a doctrine, as it professes to determine what constitutes virtue, and what constitutes vice. A virtuous action is said to be that which leads to happiness; and a vicious action, that which leads to misery. Does this constitute the moral character of actions, and is it thus we invariably judge of them? The slightest reflection may show that this is not the case. Let us only reflect upon our own consciousness, and we shall find that we often pronounce our judgment upon actions altogether irrespective of consequences, and this fact

again forces upon us the conclusion, that there are in the mind certain fixed principles by which we judge. We find that in the action pronounced virtuous, there is something which we admire and commend irrespective of consequences ; that in the action declared wrong, there is something which an internal authority condemns, apart from results to ourselves or others. There are certain actions which harmonize with the constitution of the mind ; and there are others which cause an entire revulsion.

Again, who will affirm, that the purpose for which God made man an intelligent and moral being, was simply to follow after happiness ? Who will assert that happiness is the one great aim which has been set before men, and in attaining which they shall have gained the grand purpose of their being ? The whole character of our moral being is against such an assertion ; its constitution is based upon a more exalted foundation ; it has an application inexpressibly more lofty and noble.

It is unnecessary to enter into detail, or dwell at great length upon this question, but the daily incidents of life clearly show the insufficiency and incompleteness of the doctrine of happiness, as a basis for a moral system. Take into account the depravity of man's nature, and you find but too many instances in which a man must resist his desire after happiness, if he is to adhere to what is morally right. The individual feels all the tendencies of his nature impelling him in one direction, while the alluring charms of pleasure dazzle his eye ; yet the calm, still voice within, proclaims the action wrong. Nay more, how many instances do we find, in which man must

resist not only the evil tendencies of his nature, but even the better emotions of the soul, when he must set aside the claims of affection, when he must waive his desire for the approbation of others, and when, under the guiding influence of stedfast principle, he must advance on his course, though he have to endure the grief of friends, and the scorn of a multitude of observers.

There are innumerable instances in which present happiness does not determine what is morally right, and a calculation of future happiness is not the source of our decision. Moreover, if we seek to determine the character of an action by the nature of its consequences, we cannot take into account the self-approbation or remorse which may be experienced after the action is done, since this were to beg the whole question. Self-approbation is felt only when an action is done, previously judged to be right; and remorse is felt only when an action is done, previously judged to be wrong. Both self-approbation and remorse are possible only *after* a determination of the character of the action. It is thus apparent, that the possibility of either of these emotions arising in the mind, can become evident only *after a decision has been given upon the moral character of the action.* To attempt to take these into consideration in judging of the character of the action is absurd.

I certainly do not consider that the doctrine of happiness gives anything approaching to a complete view of our moral nature, though it possesses a share of truth. I admit that there is a principle in our mind by which we approve of those actions which lead to the greater happiness of our fellow-men, but it is an exceedingly imper-

fect examination of our mental constitution which ter minates with this as the entire sum of our moral nature.

There is no doctrine sufficient to explain the facts of our consciousness except that which has been stated, that our judgment of the moral character of actions is based upon certain universal and necessary principles implanted in our mind. These are the first principles of morality, appointed to regulate all our actions. The complement of these principles is what I would call *conscience*, and, in strict philosophical propriety, I think this name should have no other application. It is true that the term Conscience is used by many philosophical writers in a much wider signification. It has been made to embrace the judgment, memory, and such feelings and emotions as shame, remorse, and self-approbation. Such a complication of phenomena under a single term, and applied to a single faculty, is in total violation of the principle which must regulate the classification of all mental phenomena.

An investigation into the nature of the mind, certainly leads to the conclusion, that we are endowed with the faculty of Conscience, that is to say, that we possess certain necessary principles by which we determine the moral character of actions. These principles having been implanted in the human mind, are a universal possession. I do not mean to assert that they are always consciously present in the mind. I even admit that, by a determined course of perversity in thought and action, they may be kept in temporary concealment; but still, these principles are there, and however morally hardened any man may be, the calm declaration of

them will compel him to admit their authority. Man may, by a constant effort, keep these principles out of view, but if his attention be directed to them, he will find himself unable to resist their authority, even though he would. Nay, even his best efforts will not succeed in keeping the first principles of morality from his mind; as a moral being, his very life involves the conscious recognition of their authority.

It is thus evident that man is a being possessed of fixed principles, by which the moral character of actions is determined. But this is not all; there is also in the mind a principle by which man recognises that he is under *obligation* to the Supreme Being, to perform what is right, and avoid what is wrong. Possessing, as he does, the knowledge of right and wrong, he is also conscious that this knowledge implies *duty*, for he feels himself responsible to the Infinite God. Duty, obligation, responsibility, are terms which do not admit of a logical definition, though they express what is constantly recognised by all. Here, then, is another relation in which arises a knowledge of the Infinite God,—a knowledge which, I maintain, is necessary to the human mind, necessary that man may exist as a moral being. Some, indeed, who have admitted that man has a moral nature, have nevertheless denied that he has a necessary *belief* in the existence of God; but a more contradictory position could scarcely be conceived. A moral being who has no belief in the existence of God, is an impossibility. If there be no God, how can there be any morality,—how can there be any virtue,—how can there be any responsibility? How can our actions be right or

wrong, if there be no Supreme Being, whose nature is the standard of all right? How can we be responsible for our actions, if there be no supreme moral Governor, who has fixed the character of all actions, and who shall call us to account? The knowledge of right and wrong, and the consciousness of obligation, necessarily imply the belief in a Supreme Being. This must be the basis of the whole moral system, else the structure falls.

It will be granted, then, that man, as a moral being, must have a *belief* in a supreme moral Governor; but, it will be denied, that we have a *knowledge* of that Infinite Being. That we know the Supreme Being as moral Governor, I consider no less clear, than that we believe in His existence. Anything more absurd can hardly be imagined than the assertion made by Hobbes, that "the name of God is not used that we may conceive Him, for he is incomprehensible, and his greatness and power inconceivable, but that we may honour him."[1] How can we honour a being, of whose nature and attributes we can form no conception? If there be in the mind certain first principles by which to determine the character of actions, and, besides, a principle by which to recognise responsibility for our actions, it is perfectly plain, that we must know the Supreme Being to whom we are responsible. We must recognise Him as a distinct personality, whose moral nature is known to us. In order to act upon the moral principles implanted in our mind, and, in order at all to feel our responsibility, we must so know the Supreme Being, as to be certain that the moral principles which we are necessitated to recognise, are in

[1] *Leviathian*, c. 3.

accordance with His moral nature, and are thus conformable to the standard to which we are responsible, and by which we shall be judged. God's nature is the ultimate standard of all right, and His will is the expression of His nature, so that it matters not, whether it be said that a thing is right, because it is in accordance with God's *nature;* or, because it is in accordance with God's *will*, —the standard being the same in both cases. But this is manifest, that fixed principles of morality, and a consciousness of obligation, in order to exist in the mind, must be accompanied by a knowledge of the Supreme Being who has imposed the standard. These two: the knowledge of moral principles; and the knowledge of a supreme moral Governor, are the inseparable terms of a relation essential for the existence of a subordinate moral being. Take away the one, and you destroy the other. Since, therefore, man is in possession of moral principles, he must also be in possession of the knowledge of a supreme moral Governor, and be capable of forming a notion of His moral excellence.

The testimony of experience gives satisfactory evidence of what is here affirmed. When we recognise an action, the performance of which is clearly marked as a part of our duty, the mind comes naturally into contact with the Supreme Being. We recognise our relation to Him, and perceive that His will demands our performance of the action. Nay, more, so positive is our knowledge of the Infinite God, that our whole emotional nature is influenced by the consciousness that He is observing us. There is no negation here. These thoughts and emotions are too real, their impression is too deep, their influence

is too solemnizing, to be referred to a negation as their originating cause. Again, when we feel tempted to commit an action which conscience condemns, our depraved tendencies may incline us to the deed, and circumstances may favour us ; but the consciousness of God's presence may overawe us, and that in a way which they cannot explain who turn the Infinite into a negation. I do not say that these thoughts are always realized ; on the contrary, I acknowledge the darkening influences of habitual violation of the moral standard ; but there are times when all men feel what has been described.

Nor are the facts of consciousness exhausted which establish my position. We have not merely certain necessary principles of moral rectitude, accompanied by the consciousness of obligation ; we have also special emotions, which perform an important part within the moral sphere. There are feelings of *self-approbation* and *remorse* which rise in the mind according to the character of our actions. When we are condemned and scorned by those around us for the discharge of what we perceive to be duty, what is that feeling of satisfaction experienced by the mind conscious of rectitude, but the sense of approval from the Supreme Being ? And when we have done wrong, what is the vexation and misery felt within ? What is the bitter feeling of remorse, but the confession of the soul to the consciousness of the presence, and of the moral character, and of the disapprobation, and of the power of the Infinite Being ?

Such are the mental phenomena recognised as belonging to the moral sphere. We are conscious of a moral distinction between actions—of obligation to perform the

one class, and shun the other ; of self-approbation in doing what is right ; and of self-condemnation in doing what is wrong,—and, according to the character of our actions, peace soothes the soul, or remorse troubles the heart. Let us try to explain these mental phenomena, without admitting the knowledge of the One Infinite Being, and the task will be found impossible. On such a hypothesis, these principles and emotions become inexplicable, and even contradictory. But admit the real and positive knowledge of the Infinite Being, and the difficulty is solved, since you have the great central fact, which gives order and unity to the whole. Give us the knowledge of the supreme and infinite Personality, supreme in moral authority, infinite in purity and holiness, and then we can think of moral right and wrong as that which *He* has ordained ; then we can form the notion of obligation, as that which *He* demands ; then we have peace, because *He* approves ; then we have fear, because *He* condemns. The knowledge of the supreme moral Governor is a necessity of our nature. Let it not be said that we have no knowledge of the Infinite Being, when our consciousness contradicts the assertion, when the universal experience of humanity is against it, and when, in multiplied instances, the knowledge of His character and actual presence is so vivid, as to make the soul exult in the approval of a satisfied God, or tremble in an agony of dismay under the frown of the Almighty.

After the analysis of the facts of consciousness just given, it will be comparatively simple to present the results in a systematic form. *First*, as the manifest basis of the whole, comes our *belief* in the existence of the

Supreme Moral Governor, or in other words, the testimony of *faith* to the reality of a Being infinitely and absolutely holy and just. This is a fundamental and necessary belief of the mind. It is a fact given to us as beyond doubt, that there is a Supreme Moral Governor; and, in testifying that He is a *Moral Governor*, it reveals the Deity as *holy and just;* in declaring that He is the *Supreme* Moral Governor, it reveals that He is *infinitely and absolutely* holy and just. Nothing less than this is the belief which we find implanted in our mind, a fact which is abundantly confirmed by experience, since the most ordinary applications of the conscience involve the admission of all this, as presented on authority superior to our own nature, and not dependent on the deductions of our reasoning power. Dr. Mansel admits this as the real ground of assurance to us concerning the Deity, and grants that "it is our duty to believe that He is infinite."[1] In this special relation, he says, "We are compelled, by the consciousness of moral obligation, to assume the existence of a *moral Deity*, and to regard the *absolute standard* of right and wrong, as constituted by the *nature* of that Deity."[2] Here, then, is the admission, that, by a necessity of our nature, we have the conviction of the existence of a *moral Deity*, of an absolute standard of right and wrong, and of the identity of that standard with the Divine nature. We necessarily believe that the Divine holiness and justice are quite above those qualities as they exist in us. While our holiness is *obedience* to God's law, His holiness is purity *without any obedience;* while our holiness is right feeling *towards* Him,

[1] *Limits of Religious Thought*, p. 89. [2] *Ibid.* p. 112.

as the Deity, His holiness is *absolute* moral excellence, without the feeling of reverence or submission towards any superior being; while our justice is equity *towards* fellow-creatures and fellow-subjects, who have claims upon us by their relation to us, His justice is the exercise of his authority *over* us, according to the moral purity of His being, and in harmony with the law which He has given us, and the relations He has appointed us to sustain. In a word, faith proclaims the existence of a being *absolutely* holy and just.

Secondly, this belief in the Absolute Moral Ruler, necessarily implies a certain *knowledge* of His nature. By the uniform laws of mind it is impossible to have a belief in some Being, who is distinguished from all others, without some knowledge of His distinguishing attributes. If, then, our belief in a moral Deity be a necessary conviction belonging to the mental constitution which our Creator has given us, there must be, in the ordinary experience of life, and exercise of consciousness, facts which call this belief into exercise. And further, by means of these facts, our *knowledge* of the Deity, as a moral Ruler, must be expanded. What these facts are, has been made sufficiently obvious in the course of this chapter. The moral nature which we have received—involving, as it does, a distinct moral law, a conviction of moral obligation, and the conflicting emotions of moral approbation and remorse—is God's revelation to us of His own moral nature. Though the sad traces of depravity are everywhere present in our heart, they are easily enough recognised as evils, which our moral nature itself condemns; and we are able clearly to

distinguish what are the essential elements of our moral condition, originally communicated to us by God. Notwithstanding the injury which depravity implies, the moral law in our nature remains clear, the consciousness of obligation to the Deity continues, and the capacity for self-approbation or remorse is not gone. With such a moral nature, and circumstances continually arising which require its exercise; and with a necessary belief in the absolutely holy and just Ruler; we have a revelation of the Deity, which implies on our part knowledge of His nature, and the power to advance in that knowledge. If, in the daily operations of our moral nature, we seek to exercise holiness and justice according to our relative position, and thereby call regularly into consciousness our original belief in the absolutely holy and just moral Governor, the knowledge, which that belief necessarily implies, must unfold within us. Here, as everywhere else, observation and reflection lead to increased knowledge. Our knowledge of the Supreme Moral Governor is a *clear* knowledge, being the knowledge of a Being *holy and just.* It is a *distinct* knowledge, involving as it does the recognition of a form of holiness and justice, not known as belonging to any other being—holiness and justice altogether above our own, to which there is no recognised restriction because of obligation to any superior, while faith expressly testifies that there is and can be none such. But, while this is a knowledge clear and distinct, it is as obviously a knowledge *inadequate.* We *can* know, only so far as our relation of moral creatures reveals the Deity; and we *do* individually know, only in so far as we reflect upon what our relation to the

Moral Governor actually reveals concerning His moral nature. Whatever diversity in the degree of knowledge of the Deity there be among men, He is not, and cannot be, in any instance known as possessed of holiness and justice identical with our own; but He is known as having such a moral nature as harmonizes with ours, to the extent to which the nature of the absolute Moral Ruler can. But He is not known as possessed of a nature "after the model of the highest human morality;" nor is it true of the Divine nature, that "its sole and sufficient type is to be found in the finite goodness of man." No one who considers the facts of consciousness, would think of describing our knowledge of the Moral Governor by such expressions. "The model of the highest human morality" is nothing more than the model of *human* morality after all, and the moral nature of the Deity is known as distinct from what is human. "The finite goodness of man" is one thing; the absolute holiness of God is quite a different thing. They are revealed to us as essentially different, and the knowledge of them is completely distinct. "The finite goodness of man" is in no sense whatever the "type" of the absolute goodness of the Deity, far less "the sole and sufficient type." No one having the least regard to the testimony of faith, in its application to the operations of our moral nature, could dream of affirming that the absolute goodness of the Supreme Being is after the "type" of the "finite goodness of man;" however true it may be, in a very subordinate sense, that "the finite goodness of man" is after the type of the Divine goodness, or that man has been created "in the image of

God." I therefore repudiate these expressions, as used by Dr. Mansel,[1] and deny that they give the slightest indication of the theory on which a positive knowledge is maintained, or that his arguments based on them have the least application to the merits of the case. It is here with most unequivocally declared that the knowledge of the Supreme Moral Governor is not, and cannot be, attained by attempting to impute to God "the model of the highest human morality;" for, in the first place, such an attempt is a mere intellectual device, altogether distinct from knowledge; and, in the second place, such a device cannot be attempted without a violation of our own moral constitution. And yet, it is herewith as unequivocally declared, on the authority of the facts of consciousness already stated, that we have a positive knowledge of the absolute goodness and justice of God, as essentially distinct from "the finite goodness of man."

Thirdly, This positive knowledge affords the materials for a *conception* of the Supreme Moral Ruler. Whatever is the object of knowledge, may also be the object of *thought*, or the object about which the mind thinks, contrasting it with other objects, and marking the points of difference. Whatever is presented in knowledge may be represented in thought. As I have endeavoured to show, it is not necessary in *conception*, any more than in knowledge, that the characteristics of the object be fully embraced. As we know the absolutely holy and just One, so we can carry up the materials of our knowledge into a conception of the Supreme Moral Ruler, such as can be represented to the mind at any time, for the purpose of reasoning

[1] *Limits of Religious Thought*, Preface to Third Edition, p. x.

concerning the Being to whom it applies, or the relations in which He must stand to His creatures, who possess a finite moral goodness. It will be observed, that it is here affirmed, that without positive knowledge, there could be no conception of the Deity ; and therefore, that this conception is the product of a positive knowledge, actually existing in consciousness. It is because we have a clear knowledge of God as holy and just, that we have a *clear conception* of a Being possessed of these attributes ; it is because we have a knowledge of His holiness and justice as absolute, that is, unrestricted by subjection to a higher authority, that we have a *distinct conception* of a Being possessed of holiness and justice, quite different from these qualities in man ; and it is because our knowledge is inadequate, that our conception must be so too. It will, therefore, be kept in view by the reader, that while a positive conception of the Supreme Moral Governor is here maintained and defended, it is not professed that this conception is attained by the "attempt to separate the condition of finiteness from the conception" of the "finite goodness of man," though Dr. Mansel affirms that such a conception can be attained in no other way. If a man were to make such an attempt, he could not come to any result, far less keep a result before his mind, "till criticism has detected the *self-contradiction involved in the attempt.*"[1] I maintain that there cannot be a belief in the existence of an absolutely holy and just Being, without at the same time a certain knowledge of His nature ; and, if there be such a knowledge, the possibility of a relative conception of His nature is certain.

[1] *Limits of Religious Thought*, Pref. to Third Edition, p. xvi.

Before concluding this chapter, it is necessary to consider somewhat more particularly the arguments of Dr. Mansel on this branch of the subject. There is, first, the usual "word-juggling" about relatives, which can never be dispensed with, however often it is to be repeated; and there is, secondly, an argument from the knowledge and conception we have of Personality.

We must, of course, say a few words over again about the first point, as this little piece of fencing seems always necessary for our author, before coming to more special debate on the particular aspect of the question presented. "The consciousness of the Infinite is necessarily excluded; first, by the mere existence of a relation between two distinct agents."[1] The necessary belief of our mind, the authority of which Dr. Mansel admits, declares as beyond all dispute, the fact that the Infinite Being does exist in relation with other agents, and this argument as involving not only a neglect, but an actual violation of faith, is wrong from the foundation. Since, therefore, the Infinite Being does exist in relation, He is not excluded from the sphere of knowledge by the fact that all knowledge implies relation. But, these remarks are quite by the way, as the established introduction to the real debate. It is true, that if this first position were of any value whatever, there could be no need for our author going further; but he never does stop short with this general statement.

The special position defended by Dr. Mansel is the following:—The Moral "Lawgiver must be conceived as a Person, and the *only human conception* of person-

[1] *Limits of Religious Thought*, p. 119.

ality is that of limitation."[1] This assertion of an alleged fact is to be met by a counter assertion, and thereafter it will be needful to lead evidence concerning the fact. I admit, then, that the Moral Lawgiver is known and conceived of as a Person, but I deny that the knowledge and conception of personality, are identical with the knowledge and conception of limitation. If we *know* a finite person, our *conception* must be that of a finite person; but if we *know* an Infinite Person, that is, if personality be known apart from limitation, then our *conception* must be that of an Infinite Person. What I seek to show is that personality is not limitation.

"Our knowledge of mind," says Dr. Mansel, "is governed by the condition of *personality*." And a person, according to him, is "a conscious self,"—a "being who is not identical with any one of his attributes, but the common subject of them all." Though I object to this way of designating *personality* as a *condition* of knowledge, I am quite willing to accept the definitions of "person," and to grant that our knowledge of mind is the knowledge of a "conscious self."

These definitions being accepted, the point demanding special attention is, what *persons* are *known* to us, and how Dr. Mansel explains the transition from knowledge to conception, or from presentation to representation, in such a way as to come to the sweeping conclusion that "personality" is identical with "limitation," or that every conscious intelligence must be finite.

Let us see how Dr. Mansel accomplishes this. The whole result is summarily attained in one brief sentence.

[1] *Limits of Religious Thought*, p. 119.

Here it is: "*Our own personality* is presented to us as relative and limited; *and* it is from *that presentation* that *all our representative notions of personality* are derived."[1] This is a most singular method of reaching a conclusion, which is certainly deserving of some little consideration. When it is said that "*our own personality* is presented to us as relative and limited," I grant it, as beyond all doubt. Consciousness in our mind is the relation of our mind to its own states, and we are certainly restricted in the exercise of our own consciousness. But true as this is of our personality, how does Dr. Mansel come to affirm that from our own personality are derived *all* our notions of personality? This is assuming the very thing which is to be established; and besides, is the assertion of a fact, the reality of which I deny; the mere assertion of which, moreover, I regard as a violation of the laws of thought. It is all-important in such discussion to keep the different parts of the subject distinct, and therefore I shall glance at the testimony of *faith*, and the facts of *knowledge*, and those of *conception*, separately.

In the *first* place, then, there is a *necessary belief* in our mind which bears testimony to the existence of an Infinite Intelligence, that is, "a conscious self," not limited in itself, and not restricted by any existence out of self. If, then, a person is "a conscious self," our necessary belief in the Deity declares the fact that there is a Personality essentially unlimited. Dr. Mansel takes no account of this fact in the present connexion, and yet, without doubt, he admits it. It is, however, to be

[1] *Limits of Religious Thought*, p. 84.

observed that while faith reveals an Infinite Intelligence, it gives no revelation to us regarding the manner in which that intelligence acts, though it expressly declares that the all-wise One is not, and cannot be, subject to the same conditions as those under which our finite minds act.

The *second* consideration here is, whether our *knowledge* involves the recognition of any personality except our own. I have granted the truth of the statement that "our own personality is presented to us as relative and limited," in other words, our consciousness involves relation and limitation. But have we no knowledge of any "conscious self" except such as is similar to our own? In opposition to Dr. Mansel, I say that there is such a knowledge in human consciousness. Having a belief in an Infinite Personality, and having a moral nature, the exercise of which brings us into direct contact with Him, we have a knowledge of that all-wise Being, and are conscious of those emotions which naturally arise when we are in the presence of a living Personality. It seems to me that Dr. Mansel, instead of inquiring carefully whether this be not a fact in consciousness, has set himself to weave ingenious logical perplexities, drawn from false premises. Our author does not content himself with saying that a person is "a conscious self,"—"a being who is not identical with any one of his attributes, but the common subject of them all," both of which statements I accept, but proceeds immediately to declare that "personality, as we conceive it, is essentially a limitation and a relation." As this assertion is made concerning "personality as we *conceive*

it," I presume it is intended to apply also to "personality as we *know* it." In this case, "personality" is identical with "limitation;" a new element is thrown into the definition of personality, and that an element which I deny; and this is done by commencing to speak only of human personality, and thereafter adopting the general term "personality," as though some wider application were given to the argument, whereas there is in reality no reference to anything else than human personality. When he says "personality is essentially a limitation and relation," he says nothing more than that *human* personality is such. And when he proceeds with the universal assertions, there is still nothing more than a particular reference. He says, "There is no personality in abstract thought without a thinker; there is no thinker unless he exercises some mode of thought." Now, what authority has our author for the assertion that there is "no personality" "without a *thinker?*" To *think* is to compare, and reach truth by the slow process of reasoning. By what authority is it affirmed that such limitation applies to every personality? Either Dr Mansel is speaking only of *human* personality, and not of all personality, or he applies the remark to the Infinite Being, and transcends his own theory in doing so. If the assertion that there is no personality without a thinker, be nothing more than the statement that every human mind is a thinker, it is a very harmless one. But if the assertion be that there is no "conscious self" without a thinker, or, in other words, that the Infinite Being must be a thinker subject to the conditions of one who compares and reasons, I reply that such a statement contradicts the neces-

sary belief of our mind, by which the Deity is revealed to us, and is besides a violation of Dr. Mansel's own theory, as it professes a knowledge where he is constantly proclaiming that there can be nothing but ignorance. Our faith which reveals God as an all-wise Being, expressly involves that He does not compare and reason. But the knowledge we have of the Deity is a knowledge of the nature of His attributes, and not of the manner of their operations. We really know nothing which enables us to answer the question *how* the Infinite Intelligence acts; whether we shall ever attain to such a knowledge is a question equally beyond our power to answer. When Augustine says, "God is not a spirit as regards substance, and good as regards quality, but both as regards substance; the justice of God is one with His goodness and with His blessedness, and all are one with His spirituality;" I perfectly agree with Dr. Mansel when he says that "we have no means of judging" whether this assertion be literally true. And so, in like manner, we have no means of judging concerning the manner in which the Divine Intelligence operates. We do know that God is just and good and blessed, but whether these are one, or in some way distinct, we cannot tell. And so, that God is all-wise is certain; that He is not "a thinker" is equally certain, but how His intelligence operates we cannot tell. That He is conscious, we are certain; that His consciousness does not involve limitation is equally certain; and therefore His Personality is not limitation, and of that Personality, I hold, we have a knowledge.

But now, in the *third* place, it is necessary to glance at the manner in which Dr. Mansel deals with our *con-*

ception of Personality. This brings us to contemplate the relation of the two clauses in the sentence originally quoted. He says: "Our own personality is presented to us as relative and limited; and it is from that *presentation* that *all our representative notions* of personality are derived." When in this last clause it is affirmed that "all our representative *notions* of personality" are drawn from our *knowledge* of our *own* personality, this must mean either, that "*all* our representative notions of personality" are notions of *human* personality; or, that our representative *notion* of the *Infinite Personality* is formed from the knowledge of our *own* personality; and both of these positions I deny.

If Dr. Mansel mean simply to declare that "*all* our representative notions of Personality" are notions of *human* personality, I deny that this is an accurate statement of the facts of consciousness. I have endeavoured to show that we have a *knowledge* of the Supreme Lawgiver; and, as we can form *conception* of all that we know, we have a conception of an Infinite Personality. The Supreme Moral Ruler is presented to our mind, and what is presented may also be conceived in a representative notion.

But if Dr. Mansel mean, and it is this which I understand him to mean, that our "representative notion" of the Infinite Personality, or "conscious self," is formed out of the knowledge of our *own* personality, I cannot imagine a more flagrant violation of the laws of human thought, than this attempt to explain our *notion* of the Infinite Being as Moral Ruler. It is the one manifest and unmistakable law of thought, that we can only have

a "*representative notion*" of that which has been a fact *presented* in consciousness. It seems a very simple and self-evident thing, that only that which has been *presented* can be *re*presented. In other words, any conception or notion which we have can be formed only from the materials of our knowledge, and can be a conception or notion *only* of the object known. And yet, if I am right in my interpretation of Dr. Mansel's meaning, he holds that our "representative notion" of the *Deity* is a notion formed from the knowledge of "*our own* personality," which is "presented to us as relative and limited." Our "representative notion" of the Infinite Ruler is formed by us from the knowledge we have of our own finite personality. If this be the doctrine maintained, I shall perfectly agree with Dr. Mansel in saying, that *such* a notion cannot contain any "*absolute* truth" concerning the Infinite Ruler; and I should like to add that it does not contain any "*regulative* truth," since such a "representative notion" would be certain to "regulate" us in the wrong direction; and, finally, that it does not contain any one particle of truth of any kind. How can we have a "representative notion" of one thing, drawn from the knowledge of a totally different thing? How can one and the same "notion" be the "representative notion" of our own finite personality, and of the Infinite Personality? If it be unflinchingly maintained that there is not, and never can be, in the human mind, any knowledge of the Infinite Being; and that there is not, and never can be, any representative notion of the Deity, or of anything more than humanity, there is at least consistency in the dismal doctrine. But, if it be affirmed

that we have a "representative notion" of the Infinite Being, from what is "presented" to us in consciousness as our own limited and relative personality, the doctrine, as I humbly think, is self-destructive. It must require more than ingenuity to show how the presentation in consciousness of what is relative and limited, can afford the materials out of which to construct a "representative notion" of the Supreme Lawgiver and Ruler. We must have a knowledge of the Infinite Being himself, else we cannot have any representative notion of such a Being. And since Dr. Mansel denies all knowledge of the Infinite Being, he is required in consistency to deny the possibility of any representative notion of Him.

To what result, then, has Dr. Mansel's reasoning on this point led him? Does he maintain that the moral nature of man involves no revelation of the Moral Lawgiver and Ruler? Hardly that. Only this: "It is not as the Infinite that God reveals himself in His moral government."[1] That is to say, "It is as the Finite that God reveals himself in His moral government." These two declarations seem to me exactly convertible, since there is no intention, I imagine, to deny that God *does* reveal Himself in His moral government; and, if he do not reveal Himself as Infinite, there is only the one alternative, that He reveals Himself as Finite. If the author of *The Limits of Religious Thought* will bring proof from the moral nature of man, or the moral government of God, to show that the Deity has revealed Himself as *Finite*, he will open up a new line of religious thought, certain to awaken a very deep interest in our land.

[1] *Limits of Religious Thought*, p. 128.

Here, then, seems to be the natural result of this Philosophy. "It is our *duty* to think of God *as personal*;"[1] and "Personality, as we conceive it, is essentially a limitation and a relation."[2] I challenge Dr. Mansel to prove that "it is our duty to think of God as limited." Whose conscience imposes on him such a duty as this? When does conscience make it a duty to *think* one thing, and *to believe* another? What evidence is there to show that "it is our duty to think of God as limited; and that it is our duty to believe that He is infinite?" Where are we taught to think concerning our God, in a way diametrically opposed to our belief in His real nature? If it be admitted that there is no appeal to the authority of *conscience* in the matter, and, therefore, that it is not our *duty* to think of God as finite, in other words, that there is no such moral obligation resting on us, it may be said that the mind is under the necessity of *thinking* concerning the object of faith. I admit that this is true, and a very important truth. But if we think about a finite object, we do not think about the object of our faith; if we exercise our thought regarding the representative notion of a limited being, that notion does not represent the Being in whom we believe as the Supreme Moral Governor. In opposition to the distinguished author of *The Limits of Religious Thought*, I continue to maintain that we have an inadequate, yet clear and distinct knowledge of the Moral Lawgiver, and consequently a distinct and clear, though imperfect conception of the real object of faith.

There are indeed many questions which arise concern-

[1] *Limits of Religious Thought*, p. 89. [2] *Ibid.* p. 84.

ing the nature of the Deity, which it is altogether impossible for us to answer, and which must be left without the slightest attempt to afford an answer, unless we would transcend our actual knowledge. We know that the Deity does not reach truth by a process of reasoning, but we do not know *in what manner* all truth is present to His mind at the same moment. We know that He is a conscious Being, but we do not know *how* there is consciousness without succession and change. We know that He is the Supreme Ruler, but *how* His supremacy is compatible with human liberty, we know not. We know that He is absolutely holy, but why evil is permitted to exist in the world, is, for the present at least, a mystery. We know that He is absolutely just, but why it is that men are permitted to suffer for obeying their conscience, while others prosper in despising its authority, we cannot fully discover. These are only a few illustrations of the mysteries which lie around us on every hand, in connexion with the Moral Government of God, any attempt to explain which must transcend the limits of human knowledge, and prove futile, or, it may be, lead to dangerous error. Our conscience does not afford an explanation of these mysteries, for it is not the province of conscience to give a complete revelation of the moral nature of the Deity, nor could such a revelation be found in the fact of our finite consciousness. But our moral being is such in nature and exercise as to lead to the unfolding within us of the necessary knowledge of the Supreme Moral Ruler, which belongs to our mental constitution. It is in connexion with the exercise of the moral nature, that we have our knowledge of the Lawgiver, and that

that knowledge enlarges in measure. And, still further, as a necessary consequence, "it is true," as Dr. Mansel has said, and I rejoice to agree with the esteemed author in this, "that to our sense of moral obligation we owe our *primary conception* of God as a moral Governor."[1]

[1] *Limits of Religious Thought,* Preface to Third Edition, p. ix.

CHAPTER IX.

THE KNOWLEDGE OF THE INFINITE BEING AS THE OBJECT OF WORSHIP.

I proceed now to indicate the final instance in which I consider that a knowledge of the Infinite Being is obtained by us. Man is not merely an intelligent and moral being, he is, by his very nature, a *religious being*. Not only must he account for the existence of all things, and thus rise from the creation to the great First Cause ; not only is he conscious of moral judgments and a sense of obligation, which must be accompanied by a knowledge of the supreme moral Governor ; but there are also emotions of reverence and adoration passing through the mind, and a sense of complete personal dependence, which have for their immediate object the one true God.

In examining consciousness for the evidence of the existence and universality of these phenomena, it is not necessary that it be proved that they are recognised in the *constant* experience of all, or that they *invariably* exercise a regulating influence over the actions of men. Careful observation will show that the emotions of veneration and awe are natural to man, that they spring up in the mind from conscious dependence upon the Deity, and that they find utterance in the words of prayer.

While, however, such emotions are natural to man, because he is by his constitution a religious being, I do not by any means deny that emotions the very reverse may predominate in the minds of many, until all trace of a religious nature might even seem to have been obliterated from the soul. These emotions may be restrained, and their existence in the nature almost forgotten, until it may be supposed that they are gone for ever. Though experienced in early life with a full flow of vigour, they may have gradually receded, until they have been lost from the view, just as the stream, gurgling from the rock, has slowly diminished under the powerful rays of the summer's sun, until its refreshing waters have ceased to flow, and left a parched channel. But as the waters of the fountain may be treasured in the store-house below, though no longer springing forth to the view, so the principles and emotions which constitute man a religious being are hid deep in his nature, though adverse influences have restrained them from their appointed exercise. And as the brook bursts forth again, when favourable influences return, so do the religious emotions spring up in the heart of man, sounding from the depths of his nature like the noise of many waters.

While maintaining the position that man is by his constitution a religious being, I do not overlook the facts which seem so strongly to contradict the existence of a religious nature in many. I do not forget that there are some who maintain that man has no religious nature; that what are called the religious emotions are the effects of illusions pressed upon the mind by a designing priest-

hood; and that the Deity himself is a fabrication and nonentity. Such a position has been held by some, but as well might it be affirmed that hunger and thirst are fictitious desires, originated and fostered by designing men, whose business it is to supply our wants. If the sceptical doctrine be true, how have men been so long deceived? Sceptics have not been wanting throughout the whole course of the world's history, who have declared that religion is a delusion, and yet how is it that men still insist upon believing the contrary? How is it that men have always admitted the authority of religion, and do still continue to admit it? The fact cannot be accounted for upon any other ground than upon the admission that religion is an essential part of man's nature.

In individual instances men may deny it if they choose, yet it is a fact well known to any one accustomed to reflect upon the operations of his own mind, that the feeling of reverence, and the sense of dependence, come at times upon the soul with the utmost power, and awaken us to such consciousness of the reality of our relation to the Deity, as not to admit of the shadow of a doubt. The disposition to doubt, and even the possibility of doubting, have passed away, and the soul is filled with the awful consciousness, that it is in the immediate presence of the infinite and eternal Spirit. Men can war against such feelings, and endeavour to banish them from the mind; but the fact that it requires an effort, is a proof that such emotions are deeply rooted, and that they readily spring up in consciousness when circumstances tend to call them forth.

This position may be theoretically denied, and is, in

fact, often enough thus treated, but it is practically impossible, and men are betrayed into its admission, however contrary to their inclinations. I hold that the plain testimony of consciousness is, that it is in accordance with the constitution of our nature to adore a Supreme Being, and to supplicate blessings of Him. If this be so, the Infinite Being is an object present to our mind, or known by us, and our knowledge of His existence and nature is such, that He becomes the object of deepest reverence, and the contemplation of His attributes raises within us the most powerful emotions of the heart, which find their natural expression in the language of fervent devotion. These are phenomena essential to the human mind, and consciousness is the witness to which appeal is made. As the facts are common to mankind generally, it may be referred to each individual, whether the statement of them be in accordance with his own experience. The facts referred to are, indeed, more liable to be concealed from notice, than the primary facts of intelligence, inasmuch as they belong to the moral and religious part of our nature, which has become perverted in a manner which cannot be affirmed of the reasoning powers. Yet, notwithstanding the peculiar difficulty connected with appeal to these facts as evidence, notwithstanding that the depravity of our nature involves some facts glaringly antagonistic to those which are now selected, I maintain that the religious emotions are so essentially a part of our nature, that they cannot be torn from the mind, and that they will, and must, arise in consciousness, when circumstances favourable to their development are presented.

If it be true, then, that the religious emotions are essential to the nature of man, it is to be expected that we shall find obvious proofs of the universality of their existence in the experience and history of all ages. It is to be expected that we shall find traces, at least, of the religious element of man's nature, even though that element has had all along to struggle against moral corruption, in order to obtain its natural manifestation. I acknowledge the propriety of such an expectation, and shall willingly, though briefly, consider whether such evidence is to be found.

I do not ask that the most favourable instances be considered ; I need not specially demand that the effects of the Christian religion be taken into account, although it is obviously the work of that religion to revive the religious nature of man, to free it from the bonds of corruption, and to raise it to its proper eminence. I ask only, whether we find traces of the existence of religious faith, of religious emotions, and of religious worship, among men in general, however much they are morally and religiously debased. Does not a man, however degraded, just because he is a man, possess a religious nature, which involves the belief in an Infinite God, a knowledge of that God, the emotions of awe and veneration, and the sense of dependence, which leads to devout adoration, and fervent supplication for mercy and favour ?

If we examine the entire course of history, we find among all nations, and in all ages, the practice of religious rites and ceremonies, forming an unbroken line of evidence by which it is proved that man is, by his very

constitution, a religious being. It is true that we find in many of these religious rites much which we, with our enlightenment, condemn. Yet, in the midst of all the darkness and immorality, we detect the working of necessary religious principles and emotions, which struggle for expression in external forms. If these principles and emotions were only the result of education, then would they disappear when men sink into a state of ignorance and barbarism. They would vanish as the arts and sciences do when man falls into heathenism. But however deep the degradation into which man may have sunk, we have never yet discovered a race altogether destitute of the notion of a Supreme Being. We have found the religious emotions darkened; we have found them injured by prejudices, and weakened by vices; but still, we have had no difficulty in detecting the traces of their existence. In the midst even of heathen darkness, we have noticed the faint pencils of light coming forth from the depth of the human soul; despite the superincumbent mass of corruption, we have found the religious element in man's nature retaining its vitality, and ever struggling forth into notice. It has indeed been perverted; it has fallen from its pristine glory; the notion of the Deity has become debased; yet, perverted and weakened though it be, the religious element is still there, and man, even in his most degraded state, has a conception of the Deity.

A closer examination will still more strongly confirm our position. The evidence already adduced is demonstrative of the fact, that man is, by a necessity of his nature, a religious being. But let us look a little more

closely into the religious history of the race, and it will be found, that even debased tribes have much higher notions of the Supreme Being, than external manifestations would seem to indicate. It is true, that we find heathen nations having such low conceptions, as to represent the Deity in an external form. But, though this be the case, I am very doubtful if an instance could be found in which the block of carved wood or stone was taken as the actual Deity, and not merely as a representative of the Supreme Being. It is true, that we find the people in heathendom bowing down before these blocks of wood, but in this we discover only a known characteristic of the human mind. For, the more the mind is uncultivated and debased, the more difficult does it become to engage the thoughts upon an object purely spiritual, and the more strongly is the necessity felt for having an external representation of the internal conception. In such a state, the external and objective predominate over the internal and subjective. This is plainly the principle by which to account for the uniform tendency of barbarous nations to adopt a material representation of the Deity, which is more or less rude, according to the degree of degradation to which the mind may have sunk. It is a further perversion in the same direction, when men proceed to ascribe to distinct divinities the different powers, or spheres of action, pertaining to the one Supreme Being. When this tendency of the mind is kept in view, it will at once appear that there is need for caution before we infer, that those who bow before some graven image, always consider it to be the true divinity. That this is the natural tendency of image

worship, I readily grant; that it is the predominating state of mind of the more degraded, seems no less obvious; yet there is evidence that this is not the primary conviction, common to every worshipper, which (sometimes consciously, sometimes unconsciously, it may be) forms the foundation of their distorted religious system. As we see the savage bow before an image, and manifest all the signs of fear as he approaches it, we verily believe that, for the time, the image is to him no mere representation, but the real Divinity. But when we see that same savage looking upon his image broken to atoms, and yet realizing that his God is not destroyed; that His powers to bless, or to injure, are not diminished; when we find that he trembles at the accident, and hastens to set up a new image; when we find him worshipping this image, or another one, as his God; we again detect the fundamental conviction struggling into notice and asserting its reality.

In all the phases of external development manifested by the religious element in man's nature, we discover the traces of the recognition of an all-powerful and omniscient Supreme Being. We find that such a Being is feared, as seeing and knowing what men cannot discover, and as possessing unlimited power to inflict punishment upon those who offend. Everywhere may we discover more or less evident tokens of this natural tendency of the human mind to worship a Supreme Being, finding external manifestation in some rude representation, or imaged forth in the Jupiter of the Romans, or in the Zeus of the Greeks.

Altering now our sphere of observation, and looking

around for any common expression of the natural feelings and emotions of the human mind, we readily turn to the Poetry and the Philosophy of mankind. Listen to the voice of Poetry from the earliest ages, and you will hear it, in stately accents, address the Deity, and plead for guidance from above. Listen, as it breathes the deepest emotions of the heart, and you will hear it swell forth in notes of exultation, as it sings of a love which is infinite. Follow it as it wanders through the scenes of surrounding beauty, and you will be gradually wafted upwards to the Father of all Goodness. Listen to its description of the commotions of nature, and you will hear the solemn tones guide with reverent awe to the presence of the Almighty. Listen as it tells of mortal woes and miseries endured, and you will hear it plead in tones of agony for mercy to the wronged, and cry aloud for vengeance on the vicious and the vile.

Trace the course of Philosophy for the last two thousand years, and you will find it ever resting in the one great centre. Without the fundamental conception of an infinite God, man is a contradiction, and Philosophy an impossibility.[1] Thus it is that Philosophy has ever recognised this great truth, and has all along given utterance to this necessary conviction of the human mind. Just as surely as Philosophy has given expression to the language of consciousness, just so surely has the recognition of a Supreme Being been decided and strong. And if at any time the voice of Scepticism has been raised, and the existence of God has been theoretically denied,

[1] In the language of M. Cousin: "La religion est la philosophie de l'espèce humaine."

it has totally failed to drive the conviction from the mind, and exclude its statement from its due position in Philosophy. Scepticism may have attempted to shake the conviction which leads us to trust in an infinite God, but it has only called forth a more searching scrutiny, which has overturned its own system, and has left the challenged principle immovable as before.

Never was there a more complete and satisfactory course of evidence than that which may be traced throughout the whole history of man, in proof of the universal recognition of the Infinite God. Everywhere you may recognise the outlines of the evidence, stretching before you into all ages, a great and obvious fact, which can be accounted for on no other theory than that here maintained—that man has a positive knowledge and conception of a Supreme Being, whom he reverences and adores. I might still further enlarge the sphere of evidence. I might rise to the higher stand-point afforded by the Christian religion; mark its effects in awakening and reviving the religious nature of man; disclose the lofty conceptions of the Deity, which it has afforded even to its humblest disciples; and then fairly conclude, that the very first step in this process supposes a positive knowledge of the infinite God. But meanwhile I refrain.

The position, then, which I maintain here is, that religion is possible only on the basis of *intelligence*. It cannot consist in feeling alone, since all feeling must take its rise from some object presented to the mind, or, in other words, known by it. But if our heart is moved with reverential awe, making the exercise of adoration the natural expression of our emotion, this emotion pre-

supposes a knowledge of a Supreme Being, and lofty conceptions of His nature. And if we have a conviction and sense of complete dependence upon a holy but loving God, who has cause to be pleased or displeased with us according to our conduct, so that it is an instinct of our nature to pray to Him for protection and mercy, these presuppose a knowledge of the adorable Being. With our belief in His existence, and our conviction and sense of complete dependence upon Him, there must be a positive knowledge of His nature ; and if there be such a knowledge, a positive conception follows by necessity. He is known to us as the absolutely holy, wise, powerful, loving, and merciful Being. Fellow-creatures we may know who are holy, wise, powerful, loving, and merciful too ; but not one who can for a moment bear comparison with Him. Nay, we recognise that His holiness, wisdom, power, love, and mercy, are quite different from theirs, and unspeakably higher. In our knowledge of Him there is the recognition of that which is essentially distinctive, a nature which could not, even by any effort of imagination, be attributed to another. Try even in thought to limit or restrict the object of worship, and you instantly destroy the conception. A God restricted is manifestly no God at all. Any finite being, however holy, wise, powerful, loving, and merciful, still leaves to the mind the conscious necessity of rising to a higher Being, who is supreme and infinite. The mind must come into conscious relation with the Divine Being, before He can become an object awakening our reverence and affection, and to whom we address our entreaties. There is no method of escaping this conclusion, and an

impartial examination of consciousness can present no motive for attempting it. Consciousness reveals the knowledge of the Deity, and *prayer* is the external and undeniable manifestation of the reality of the knowledge. This is a *clear* knowledge, involving the clear recognition of the attributes which belong to the Divine nature ; it is a *distinct* knowledge, involving the recognition of His attributes as essentially distinct from all others ; yet it is an inadequate knowledge, involving, at best, only such a recognition of the Divine excellence as a finite being can have, though it is capable of indefinite enlargement, according as we advance to a closer acquaintance with the glory of the Deity.

How utterly insufficient is the *analogical* theory of worship, must be apparent at a glance ; for if, by a mere intellectual device, we attempted to use the conceptions of human holiness, power, wisdom, love, and mercy, *as if* they applied to another being designated a Deity, we could not offer intelligent worship to such a Being. Some other conception of the Deity there must be, else it is irrational and impious to offer worship. To say, as Bishop Browne does, that our feelings of reverence and affection, and our adoration are awakened by the contemplation of a Being to whom in thought we transfer our own intellectual and moral qualities, is manifestly self-contradictory, for our awe and dependence can never find their proper object in a being like ourselves. "Thus," says the Bishop, "are our love, joy, fear, hope, desire, gratitude, employed, not *immediately* upon any direct ideas of the real perfections of *God* or *heavenly bliss*, which are incomprehensible ; but upon the ana-

logous conceptions we form of the *goodness* and *power* of God, and of a future bliss, from the best notions of that goodness, and power, and happiness, which we experience *here*."[1] While granting that there is a certain analogy between our intellectual and moral attributes and those of the Deity himself, it is very manifest that there must first be a positive knowledge, not only of our own nature, but also of the Divine nature, before we could discover the analogy. And, besides, even after we have discovered the analogy, we at the same time so clearly recognise the distinction, that we could not even attempt to impute our best notions of human goodness and power to the Deity, and then worship this object of our own creation.

While, however, I maintain that we have a positive knowledge of the Divine Being, as the object of worship, it is very manifest that this knowledge is not a complete knowledge, as indeed it never can be in any finite mind. Though we have a positive knowledge of the Deity, such as is sufficient to afford the explanation, and is the only sufficient explanation, of our religious feelings and exercises, it cannot be an adequate or all-comprehensive knowledge ; and besides, it is not sufficient to answer all the questions which our intellect may raise concerning the nature and procedure of the Absolute Being whom we worship. Here, as everywhere else when knowledge and thought are concerned with the Infinite Being, mysteries must arise, necessarily inexplicable to our mind, and such in their very nature that we only attempt to transcend the limits of our knowledge and thought,

[1] *The Procedure, Extent, and Limits of the Human Understanding*, pp. 201, 202.

in attempting to solve them. These mysteries must remain mysteries to all men, because of the limits of our mind, and such mysteries there must be hanging out before the human mind to all eternity. This is the true lesson which comes to us from the recognised limits of our own mind, and true philosophy will not only accept the lesson, but regard it as part of its task to mark out those questions which are to be left unsolved, as pointing to what is necessarily mysterious to us. That the Infinite Being is the fit object of worship, we know and are sure, without the slightest trace of mystery in the matter. But while we know that He is the Being to be adored, and essentially the *hearer* of prayer, our knowledge of His nature is not such that we can explain, to ourselves, *how* the unchangeable One does, in perfect consistency with His unchangeable excellence and purposes, *answer* prayer. This is to us a mystery, which we must be contented to leave unexplained, even while we believe that the harmony is complete, and would be recognised as such, were the recognition of it a possible thing for us.

But, while it is very manifest that the limits of our knowledge concerning the Deity, necessarily imply that our intellect will raise insoluble questions, that is, come to points of reflection essentially mysterious, it is equally clear that we must have some positive knowledge of the Absolutely holy One, in order to render to Him an intelligent worship. They who deny all positive knowledge of the Infinite Being, not only acknowledge mysteries where they really exist, that is, in relation with questions which must carry us beyond the limits of knowledge and

thought in order to find their solution; but they create mysteries where there are none, that is, in relation with facts which are within the limits of our knowledge and thought. For if we have no positive knowledge of the object of worship, that worship is a mystery; that is to say, an exercise of mind which is to ourselves inexplicable, and, therefore, irrational. By such an indefensible theory, religion is not only divorced from intelligence, but diametrically opposed to it.

It is with extreme regret that I find myself incessantly constrained to come into conflict with an author whose ability all must admire, and the spirit of whose discussions must have gained for him the esteem of all who appreciate the grandeur of the theme with which he deals; but, I must once more indicate, and that quite as decidedly as in former cases, my dissent from the conclusions drawn by Dr. Mansel. He broadly affirms that "*religion is not a function of thought*,"[1] and asserts that "the history of mankind in general, as well as the consciousness of each individual, alike testify" to this. I cannot forbear from expressing my painful sense of the humbling position which any philosopher occupies, who makes it his task to proclaim the divorce of religion from intelligence. But it is more properly my part to repeat, what I have already said above, that "the history of mankind in general," as it seems to me at least, and my own consciousness, "alike testify" that religion is a function of thought. If religion be a function of *knowledge*, it can also be a function of *thought*; and, if it be neither a function of knowledge nor of thought, in accordance

[1] *Prolegomena Logica*, p. 276.

with what law of mind can it be a function of emotion? If intelligence have no part in our religion, will Dr. Mansel explain how our religious emotions arise? If the object of worship—the absolutely Holy One—be not presented to the mind, how can we cherish certain feelings towards Him, or offer Him any intelligent service? If we can know Him only by *what He is not*,—do we feel towards Him as we do, *because of what He is not?*—do we worship Him *because He is not such as anything known to us?* Is this the kind of negative religion warranted by a "negative knowledge of the Infinite"? And, if a harmony of the theory of the author of *The Limits of Religious Thought* is to be found (without asking how he came to write a book concerning the *limits* of religious *thought*, since "religion is not a function of thought" at all), it may be asked, how it is that he has declared, that "it is by consciousness alone that we know that God exists, or that we are able to offer Him any service. It is only by *conceiving* Him as a conscious Being, that we can stand in any religious relation to Him at all."[1] If it be borne in mind that our knowledge of God does not imply that His consciousness involves succession of states, I cheerfully accept this statement; but, while I hold the doctrine so admirably stated in this quotation, I cannot also hold that "religion is not a function of thought."

Again, I find Dr. Mansel say, that "our positive religious consciousness is *of the finite only;*"[2] in answer to which I reply, that consciousness which is "of the finite only," cannot be *religious* consciousness, for there can be

[1] *Limits of Religious Thought*, p. 87. [2] *Ibid.* p. 120.

no religious element whatever in our consciousness of a finite being. That which is known as "finite only," cannot, by our mental constitution, awaken religious emotion within us; and it cannot, by the authority of our conscience, warrant us in rendering to it any religious service. And when the same author affirms that "it is not *as the Infinite* that God promises to answer prayer," it follows that it must be "*as the finite*" that He reveals Himself, when He promises to answer prayer; in other words, He must reveal Himself to us *as He is not*, and that expressly for the purpose of giving a promise, the consistency of which with His own nature is of vital importance to us, if we are to rest on His promise. It is very true, that it is a mystery to us, that is, a thing not within the limits of our knowledge, *how* God is at once unchangeable and the answerer of prayer; but that it is in perfect harmony with His nature to be at once unchangeable and the answerer of prayer, is the testimony of our necessary belief in His existence and relation to us. But when it is asserted that "it is not *as the Infinite* that God promises to answer prayer," it seems to me that the assertion is destitute of the slightest authority, and is, besides, an attempt unwarrantably to explain, what we must be contented to leave unexplained.

In conclusion, I maintain that the Infinite Being, while the object of *faith*, is also *known* to us as the object of worship, and that we have thereby a clear and distinct, though inadequate *conception* of His nature. As expressive, so far at least, of the ground on which this doctrine rests, I am glad to quote the words of Dr.

Mansel: "Religious thought, if it is to exist at all, can only exist as representative of some fact of religious intuition,—of some individual state of mind, in which is presented, as an immediate fact, that relation of man to God, of which man, by reflection, may become distinctly and definitely conscious."[1]

[1] *Limits of Religious Thought*, p. 108.

CHAPTER X.

THE TESTIMONY OF SCRIPTURE CONCERNING MAN'S KNOWLEDGE OF THE INFINITE BEING.

The question regarding the possibility of a knowledge of the Infinite One has naturally carried the upholders of the conflicting theories into the sphere of Bible research. It is impossible to prevent the discussion from extending to an inquiry concerning the testimony of the Scriptures on the point. If the assertion that man can have no positive knowledge of *The Infinite*, have any meaning at all, it must refer to the Deity; and, if so, since the Bible professes to be a revelation from God, it becomes necessary to inquire in what measure the Scriptures reveal the Infinite Being, and what knowledge of His nature they admit as possible to man. Accordingly, the discussion has been greatly extended by the quotation, on both sides, of passages of Scripture, to which appeal has been made in vindication of conflicting doctrines. It must be admitted, however, that instead of careful research into the whole teaching of Scripture on the subject, the contending parties have simply seized on a few passages which seemed to favour their respective opinions, and to overturn those maintained against them. In this way, M. Cousin is found quoting passages which teach that

God has made Himself known to us, while Sir W. Hamilton has gathered together some few illustrations of Scripture statement, in which it is taught that God is "unsearchable." The very different aspect of the quotations given by the two authors, so far from showing that either has satisfactorily determined the actual testimony of Scripture on the matter, only shows that both have been one-sided in their examination, and that neither has taken sufficiently into account the fact, that there are two classes of passages bearing on the subject before us, the one referring to a knowledge which we have, and the other to a measure of knowledge which is beyond our reach.

It is necessary, before concluding this treatise, that I endeavour to present some view of what God teaches in the Bible concerning His own nature; in other words, what revelation He has made of Himself in His Word. It is not without apprehension that I enter upon this part of my task. Every one who has a deep reverence for God's Word must regard with extreme aversion, even the slightest hazard of wresting the language of Scripture from its true signification, for the defence of any philosophical theory, however strong the conviction of its accuracy. The only legitimate province of any inquirer in this sphere is that of an interpreter, and to that I desire exclusively to confine myself, in the hope that I may be saved from using any passage in a manner which the strictest rules of interpretation do not warrant. Moreover, every Bible reader must be conscious of the need for more than ordinary caution in seeking to decide the actual bearing of scriptural statements on philosophical discussions, inasmuch as it is self-evident that the

Divine revelation is presented in language such as is common to all, and without regard to the niceties of philosophical distinction. This fact must be continually taken into account, if the interpreter of the Scriptures would avoid unduly straining verbal differences in the sacred text. At the same time, the language of God's Word is so completely in harmony with the ordinary operations of the human mind, which all men are accustomed to recognise, that any philosophical theory concerning the Infinite Being, which professes to be based on the facts of consciousness, may be easily brought to the test of the written Revelation.

The whole structure of the Bible is such as to make it manifestly a *revelation* which the Deity gives of Himself, and not a *proof* of His existence. Here God is found in direct communication with His intelligent creatures. The words are His words; the statements of truth are His statements. The Bible is either a Divine communication of truth to man, or it is in its entire nature deceptive. I am not at present dealing with those who deny that the Bible is a Divine Revelation, and it is not my province here to turn aside for an examination of its evidences. The present inquiry implies the acceptance of the Bible as God's Word. Having acknowledged it as such, when we proceed to examine its contents, we find no attempt to demonstrate the *Divine existence,* for the sake of those who profess to deny it. As a revelation from God, it pre-supposes the existence of the Being from whom it comes. Besides this, however, there is in the Bible no trace of an admission that men need to have the existence of the Deity demonstrated to them. Man is

appealed to as a being who has such a belief in his own nature, and who has only to be referred to the forms of finite existence, for illustrations of the certainty of the being of God. "The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament showeth his handiwork. Day unto day uttereth speech, and night unto night showeth knowledge."[1] If there be a mind to observe and to think, it is impossible to contemplate the firmament in its splendour, without the conviction that God exists. But what is said of those who have sunk into such intellectual and moral debasement, that they are slow to recognise the lessons which the works of nature are fitted to convey? "The wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who hold the truth in unrighteousness; because that which may be known of God is manifest in them; for God has showed it unto them. For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead; *so that they are without excuse;* because that, when they knew God, they glorified Him not as God, neither were thankful; but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened."[2] It is not necessary at the present point to inquire very particularly into the exact significance of the phrase, "that which may be known of God" (*τὸ γνωστὸν τοῦ Θεοῦ*), or of the statement that the heathen nations are "without excuse" (*ἀναπολογήτους*); but it is sufficiently obvious that in this passage all are held responsible for a belief in "the eternal power and Godhead" of the Creator. That

[1] Psalm xix. 1. [2] Romans i. 18-21.

much more is implied in this scriptural declaration, I think certain; but I content myself with a reference to the forcible testimony it presents in favour of a universal belief. I may, however, state in passing, that Alford's view of the passage seems to me beyond question the right one, when he says that "τὸ γνωστὸν τοῦ Θεοῦ will mean, *that universal objective knowledge of God as the Creator* (the italics are Alford's) which we find more or less in every nation under heaven, and which, as matter of historical fact, was proved to be in possession of the great Gentile nations of antiquity."

While, however, it is plainly declared in the Bible that a belief in the Divine existence is natural to man, it is at the same time admitted that men may, in their folly and sin, deny the Being of God. Thus, "The fool hath said in his heart, There is no God."[1] It has been no unusual thing for men to say this, and yet the Scripture standeth true, they are "without excuse." The saying of such a "fool," or of any number of such fools, in no way invalidates the words of Divine truth, that "the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead." I cannot do better than quote the words of Lord Bacon on this passage. He says,—"The Scripture saith, 'The fool hath said in his heart, There is no God;' it is not said, The fool hath *thought* in his heart; so as he rather saith it by rote to himself, as that he would have, than that he can thoroughly believe it, or be persuaded of it; for none deny there is a God but those for whom it

[1] Psalm xiv. 1.

maketh there were no God."[1] This is, indeed, the Scriptural explanation of the denial of the Divine existence on the part of men. None deny that there is a God but those whose conduct and character are such as to make it a desirable thing for them that there were none. "The *fool* hath said in his heart, There is no God. They are corrupt; they have done abominable works; there is none that doeth good."

If, then, it be ascertained that the Scriptures teach that the works of creation are evidence enough of the Divine existence, and that every man is inexcusable who denies it, the next question is, What revelation of His nature has the Divine Being given in the Scriptures? He is declared to be "eternal, immortal, invisible;"[2] Him "no man hath seen, nor can see."[3] We are thus taught to regard the Deity as essentially *invisible*, because "God is a *spirit*,"[4] and warned to cast away from our thought and feeling, every tendency to contemplate God as material; and to banish from our worship, every material form intended to represent the Deity. In the same way we are debarred from attempting to place before the imagination anything intended for a representation of the Divine Being. The object of faith, and knowledge, and thought, and feeling, He may be, but the object of imagination He cannot be. "To whom, then, will ye *liken* God? or what likeness will ye compare unto him?"[5] "Even from everlasting to *everlasting*, thou art God."[6] "Thus saith the high and lofty One *that inhabiteth eternity*, whose name is holy."[7] "Great

[1] *Essays*,—Atheism. [3] 1 Tim. vi. 16. [5] Isa. xl. 18.
[2] 1 Tim. i. 17. [4] John iv. 24. [6] Psalm xc. 2. [7] Isa. lxii. 15.

is the Lord, and of great power, his understanding is *infinite*."[1] "I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the ending, saith the Lord, which is, and which was, and which is to come, the *Almighty*."[2] "With God all things are possible."[3] He "knoweth *all things*;" with Him "is *no variableness*, neither shadow of turning;" He is "*glorious in holiness*, fearful in praises, doing wonders." These are only a few illustrations of the manner in which the Deity reveals the excellency of His nature. The examples have been selected with a special regard to their brevity, and at the same time to their sufficiency as representative of the general modes of expression to be found in the Bible. The readers of the Sacred Word will recognise them as but specimens of the passages scattered profusely throughout its entire extent. That they must be regarded as a direct revelation of God as infinite and absolute, seems to me unquestionable. They certainly do not present "a finite manifestation" of the Deity, nor are they a revelation of the Infinite Being under "a finite form." They are such as to warn us of the utter impossibility of regarding God as finite. And most certainly when the Deity is said to be "invisible," "a spirit," "everlasting," "infinite," "almighty," "glorious in holiness," these are not mere representative "symbols" of what God is, but a simple declaration of what He really is. Whatever opinion be held concerning the knowledge man can have of such a Being, there can be no doubt that, as revealed in the Bible, He is declared to be in every respect absolute or perfect.

Having thus seen what revelation the Bible gives of

[1] Psalm cxlvii. 5. [2] Rev. i. 8. [3] Matt. xix. 26.

the Divine nature, it is necessary now to inquire what the Word of God teaches concerning the *knowledge* which we can have of His nature. And here, I remark *first*, that the Scriptures most emphatically declare that *it is the glory of God that He is incomprehensible by the finite mind*, that is to say, He is such in His nature that He cannot be fully known by any created intellect. This is declared to be a necessary fact which must regulate the thought and the worship of both angels and men. "Great is the Lord, and greatly to be praised; and his greatness is *unsearchable*."[1] The expression "unsearchable" (אֵין חֵקֶר) refers to that which it is impossible fully to contemplate or examine. It is the same expression which is applied in the book of Proverbs to the height of the heaven, the depth of the earth, and the purposes of a king. It is there said, "It is the glory of God to conceal a thing, but the honour of kings is to search out a matter. The heaven for height, and the earth for depth, and the heart of kings is *unsearchable*." This passage shows that the expression is applied to any object which is beyond the compass of measurement on our part, or cannot be fully comprehended. As applied to the Deity, it indicates the essential glory of His nature, which is such as to be incomprehensible to *all* His intelligent creatures, and must continue so for ever. The conditions of our knowledge are such, that we must invariably and reverently acknowledge this truth. And this Divine "greatness" must be held to embrace all His attributes, since the same language is adopted in speaking of His power, wisdom, goodness, love, mercy,

[1] Psalm cxlv. 3.

and every excellence which is declared to belong to His nature.

Another passage of Scripture may be given, to show how it is taught that there is perfect harmony between the fact that the glory of God is unsearchable, and the assertion of a knowledge of the unsearchable One. In the prayer of the apostle Paul for the Ephesian Church, the following words occur: "That ye, being rooted and grounded in love, may be able to *comprehend* with all saints what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height; and to *know* the love of Christ, which *passeth knowledge*, that ye might be filled with all the fulness of God."[1] This passage presents an instance of the need for the careful application of the manifest principle, that the language of Scripture is not to be interpreted by a rigid adherence to scientific distinctions in the use of terms. "To comprehend" (καταλαβέσθαι) signifies, in general, to perceive, to know, to understand, to apprehend, and to comprehend; and, therefore, the use of the word "to comprehend," in the English version, is not to be taken as implying a complete knowledge or conception of the object. On the contrary, it is distinctly affirmed that the love of the Deity "passeth knowledge;" and yet, the prayer of the Apostle is, that the members of the Ephesian Church may *know* that love, an attainment which is declared to be a common possession of "all saints."

This leads me to remark, *secondly*, that the Bible uniformly declares *that man has a knowledge of the Deity*. So far from teaching that God is a Being from

[1] Ephesians iii. 18, 19.

whom we are entirely separated in knowledge, the Scriptures expressly teach that man has a measure of knowledge of the Divine excellence, and is capable of making constant advancement in it, according as he contemplates the works of God, and seeks, in religious exercises, spiritual communion with the Most High.

There is one passage of Scripture which has been so much adverted to, in connexion with this discussion, that it seems essential that it should have immediate consideration, since appeal is made to it as completely contradicting the possibility of any knowledge of the Infinite Being, in the present state at least. It is the passage in the First Epistle to the Corinthians, where it is said: "We know in part (ἐκ μέρους), and we prophesy in part; but when that which is perfect (τὸ τέλειον) is come, then that which is in part shall be done away. . . . For now we see through a glass darkly (ἐν αἰνίγματι), but then face to face; now I know in part (ἐκ μέρους), but then shall I know even as also I am known."[1] Before attempting any exegetical remarks on this passage, I deem it proper to present to the reader the interpretation given by Sir W. Hamilton. He says: "The Scriptures explicitly declare that the infinite is for us now incognizable; they declare that the finite, and the finite alone, is within our reach. It is said (to cite one text out of many), that '*now* I know *in part*' (*i.e.*, the finite; 'but *then*' (*i.e.*, in the life to come) 'shall I know, even as I am known' (*i.e.* without limitation)."[2] This is certainly a singular specimen of Bible interpretation, and a very summary way of disposing of the testimony of Scripture

[1] 1 Cor. xiii. 9, 10, 12. [2] *Lectures on Metaphysics*, II. p. 375.

on this important subject. In the passage quoted from the Word of God, it seems manifest, in the *first* place, that the Apostle is treating of *different degrees of knowledge* of the same Being, and not at all of the knowledge of different objects. On this account I deem the interpretation given by Sir W. Hamilton inconsistent with itself. To make the first clause apply to the measure of the *object*, and the second to the degree of *knowledge*, is an inconsistency. When the Apostle says: "Now I know in part, but then shall I know even as also I am known," he says that his *knowledge* is "in part," and that his *knowledge* shall be even "as he is known." But, besides being inconsistent in his mode of interpretation, it seems to me, in the *second* place, that Sir W. Hamilton has given a misinterpretation of both clauses. When the Apostle says, "Now I know *in part*," I deny that his statement is equivalent to that into which it is rendered by Sir W. Hamilton—"Now I know *the finite*." For, in respect of the *object*, it is the *same* object which he says he now knows "in part," and which he shall afterwards know "as he is known," and that object is whatsoever is unseen and eternal, and more especially, the unseen God. Again, in respect of his *knowledge*, when the Apostle says he *knows* "*in part*," the statement is equivalent to the correlative clause in the first part of the verse, when he says, "Now we see through a glass darkly" (δι' ἐσόπτρου ἐν αἰνίγματι), that is, we do see God, but it is imperfectly, and through, or by the aid of, a reflection of His glory. But, still further, it seems to me that Sir W. Hamilton has fallen into a misinterpretation of the latter portion of the quotation, when he represents the words,

"then shall I know even as also I am known," as equivalent to "then shall I know *without limitation*." For, in respect of God's *knowledge* of man, it is knowledge of a finite being, and therefore a knowledge which has boundaries or limitation. It must, from the very nature of the case, be a mistake to represent the Divine knowledge of a human creature as an *infinite* knowledge. Again, in respect of the possible expansion of man's knowledge in the future world, it cannot be knowledge "without limitation." Though it be a knowledge of God "as we are known" by Him, it will not be knowledge "without limitation;" and there is no sanction in Scripture for such a doctrine, as that we shall at length attain to infinite knowledge.

In reference to this same passage of Scripture, Dr. Mansel writes as follows: "I believe that Scripture teaches to each and all of us the lesson which it was designed to teach, so long as we are *men upon earth*, and not as the *angels in heaven*. I believe that 'now we see through a glass darkly'—in an enigma; but that now is one which encompasses the whole race of mankind, from the cradle to the grave, from the creation to the day of judgment: that dark enigma is one which no human reason can solve; which reason is unable to penetrate; and which faith can only rest content with here, in hope of a *clearer vision* to be granted hereafter."[1] In respect of the knowledge we have in our *present* state, all are agreed that "we *see* through a glass *darkly*;" certainly this is true from the first dawn of intelligence, till the hour of departure from this world. But, though

[1] *Limits of Religious Thought*, p. 263.

it be seeing through a glass darkly, it is still sight; and if we have, as there can be no doubt we have, sufficient ground to hope that there is "a clearer vision to be granted hereafter," this involves the admission that we have a certain imperfect vision now. In respect of the knowledge of God which man possessed at "the creation," I do not feel competent to speak with certainty; but I incline to think that man's knowledge of God before the fall, was so much superior to that which we have now, and so like to what the angels have in heaven, that Dr. Mansel is wrong in assigning to it the same imperfection, which adheres to the knowledge every man has now "from the cradle to the grave." It seems to me that this classification of the knowledge of God which man has now, with the knowledge which he had at the creation, must involve a misinterpretation of the Scriptural statement: "So God created man in his own image: in the image of God created he him;" and also of that other striking, and to us mysterious reference to "the voice of the Lord walking in the garden in the cool of the day." I shall consider hereafter the reasoning of Dr. Mansel, in connexion with this passage, regarding the knowledge of the Infinite Being, possible to man in another state.

Bishop Browne, though constantly restrained by his analogical theory concerning man's knowledge of the Infinite Being, comes nearer an interpretation of the Apostle's words. In seeking to vindicate knowledge by analogy, he says, "The Atheists themselves find their account in laying aside and confounding this analogy; for thus they argue: If God is Infinite, no finite human

understanding can have any knowledge at all of him. It cannot know him in the *whole*, because nothing finite can comprehend infinity; nor can it know any *part* of him, there being no part of infinity. To which I return the Apostle's answer, that though we cannot be said to know any *part* of him, yet we are truly said to know him *in part*, as we see the reflection of a substance in a looking-glass."[1] Bishop Browne enters very fully into a critical examination of this passage from the First Epistle to the Corinthians; but, though agreeing with him on many points, and differing on others, I cannot afford space for criticism.[2] The points of difference will appear as I proceed.

There are two clauses in the verse, which refer to our present knowledge, and are explanatory of each other; and, in like manner, there are two clauses which refer to our future knowledge, and are also mutually explanatory. I shall glance at the respective clauses in the order of their application, as they refer to present, or to future, knowledge. "Now we see through a glass, darkly; but then face to face: now I know in part; but then shall I know even as also I am known."

It is necessary, *first*, to consider the testimony of this portion of Scripture concerning the knowledge we have in the present. Of the two clauses, the former affirms (1.) that we *see;* (2.) that we see *darkly;* and (3.) that we see darkly *through a glass.* When it is said that we *see* (βλέπομεν), there can be no doubt that this indicates *knowledge* of God, and is exactly equivalent to the ex-

[1] *The Procedure, Extent, and Limits of the Human Understanding*, p. 30.

[2] *Ibid.* p. 112; and *Analogy*, p. 37, and again, p. 184.

pression in the correlative clause "now I *know*." But the Apostle affirms that we see *darkly* (ἐν αἰνίγματι). This word rendered *darkly*, is properly *in an enigma* or *riddle;* and the meaning of the clause, "we see darkly," is manifestly, we see the Infinite One inadequately or imperfectly, as a fact is partly disclosed, partly hid, in a riddle. That this is the real meaning is increasingly apparent, if it be observed that the word here used (αἰνίγμα) is that given by the Septuagint in the passage (1 Kings x. 1), "And when the queen of Sheba heard of the fame of Solomon, concerning the name of the Lord, she came to prove him *with hard questions*" (ἐν αἰνίγμασι). The questions which the queen wished to put were hard questions to the majority, and yet questions which men could solve, for we read that Solomon "answered all her questions." What we see in an enigma, therefore, is what we see darkly, but may come to see more clearly. The Septuagint affords us another example, still more striking, in its rendering of the passage where God declares the manner in which He has revealed Himself to His servant Moses (Numb. xii. 8): "With him will I speak mouth to mouth, even apparently, and not in dark speeches (δι' αἰνιγμάτων); and the similitude of the Lord shall he behold." These "dark speeches" are such as to reveal the Deity very inadequately, and yet, even in this world, God gave it to Moses as a privilege, to see more clearly and fully than is common to men in the present state.

The Apostle, however, not only indicates the nature of the knowledge we now have, but also the manner in which we come to the exercise and expansion of this

knowledge. He says, "We see darkly *through a glass*" (δι' ἐσόπτρου). The glass here spoken of is not a transparent glass, not a medium through which we see, but a looking-glass or mirror. It is the same word which is employed by the apostle James, when he says, "If any be a hearer of the word, and not a doer, he is like unto a man beholding his natural face in a *glass;* for he beholdeth himself, and goeth his way, and straightway forgetteth what manner of man he was." When, then, the apostle Paul, speaking of the knowledge of God, which we have in the present state, says we see darkly through a glass, his words are not such as to lead any one to suppose, that, by looking through some external medium, we see God. His words mean, that we see or know God through, or by means of, some reflection of His glory on the surface of a mirror, which we are accustomed to behold. The works of God are, to an intelligent creature gazing upon them, a mirror, in which is seen shining a reflection of the glory of the great Creator. These three, the act of seeing God, seeing darkly, and seeing darkly through a glass, are equivalent to a knowledge of God; a knowledge which is inadequate; and an inadequate knowledge, attained and extended through means of the contemplation of His works.

In perfect accordance with this view of the text is the correlative clause in the latter part of the verse,—"Now I know in part" (ἐκ μέρους), literally of a part, but adverbially, as in this case, "in part, partly, *i.e.*, imperfectly," as Robinson says. Anything more inconsistent than Hamilton's rendering, "now I know *the finite*," can hardly be conceived. The expression, "in

part," does not describe any division of the object, but indicates a mode of knowing, in contrast to that mode, or full measure of knowledge which God has of us. This clause of the verse is an explicit declaration that we do know God, though it be only imperfectly. A few verses before that which is engaging attention, we find the Apostle saying, "We know in part, and we prophesy in part." It is impossible to make this mean, "we know the finite, and we prophesy the finite." But it does very clearly imply that the restriction which belongs to our knowledge, belongs also to the prophecy itself; in other words, the revelation is imperfect, and our knowledge is like it. We have received a revelation of the Deity, but even those who have prophesied, have done so only imperfectly. We do in the present state know God, but ours is a *partial knowledge.*

It is time to consider shortly the clauses of the verse which refer to the measure of knowledge which the Apostle declares will be enjoyed in the future state. Though now we see only through a glass darkly, we shall then see "*face to face.*" What interpretation is to be given to this expression? The phrase, "face to face," occurs in other passages in the Word of God, and from these we may receive aid in deciding upon the true rendering of the passage before us. In the very striking description we have of the wrestling of Jacob by the brook Jabbok, when it was said to him, "Thy name shall be called no more Jacob, but Israel: for as a prince hast thou power with God and with men, and hast prevailed," we find these words used by the patriarch:[1]—"I have

[1] Gen. xxxii. 30.

seen God face to face, and my life is preserved." The same thing is also said concerning Moses, "There arose not a prophet since in Israel like unto Moses, whom the Lord knew face to face."[1] And again it is said, "And the Lord spake unto Moses face to face, as a man speaketh unto his friend."[2] From these passages it is manifest that to see God "face to face" (*πρόσωπον πρὸς πρόσωπον*), has been the privilege of some of the servants of God even in this world. From the statements made concerning Jacob and Moses, we are better able to interpret the language of the text, in which it is said concerning all Christians, that they shall afterwards see face to face. The expression clearly indicates direct communion with God, which will afford a more full and satisfying view of His glory. In the present, we know God, but our knowledge is expanded only by the aid of His works, which are as a mirror of His excellence. In the world to come, however, we shall enjoy direct fellowship with God, and shall know Him without any darkening obstacle, and more fully than could have been possible by the longest and most careful study of His works.

Another mode of representing the higher knowledge of the heavenly state, is found in the last clause of the verse, where the Apostle says, "Then shall I know *even as also I am known*" (*καθὼς καὶ ἐπεγνώσθην*). In order to interpret this aright there are two questions to be answered,—How are we known of God? and, What key does His knowledge of us, give us of the knowledge we shall hereafter have of Him? To the first of these questions,—How are we known of God? it is an an-

[1] Deut. xxxiv. 11. [2] Exod. xxxiii. 11.

swer too superficial, to say, that we are fully known of Him. "To be known of God," is a phrase which has a certain acknowledged Scriptural significance, and it is necessary that we turn to some of the passages in which it is employed, before we can be warranted in attaching a special meaning to it in the present instance. Take for example,—"If any man *love* God, the same is *known of him.*"[1] All men are, indeed, known of God, but there is a peculiar sense in which this is said of those who are lovers of God. Their love cannot in any way alter the *measure* of knowledge which God has of their nature, character, and conduct; nevertheless, there is a sense in which it is true of them, as it is not true of others, that they are known of God. They are not only fully known of God, as all men are, but known as His own people, that is to say, His knowledge of them is such as constantly to involve approbation of their character, and affectionate regard to their persons. Their love of Him makes them the objects of His complacent regard. The apostle Paul uses the expression once more in his Epistle to the Galatians: "Now, after that ye have known God, or rather *are known of God*, how turn ye again to the weak and beggarly elements, whereunto ye desire again to be in bondage?"[2] This passage brings distinctly into view the doctrine uniformly taught in the Bible, that there is a peculiar sense in which they who love God, know Him. While all men know God in a measure, they who love Him have a higher knowledge of His nature. Now, it is in reference to such that the Apostle says, "they are known of God," making

[1] 1 Cor. viii. 3. [2] Gal. iv. 9.

it obvious that His special knowledge of them, has a peculiar reference to the love which they cherish towards Him. When, therefore, the same Apostle says concerning the future state, "then shall I know even as also I am known," we must interpret his language with a due regard to the use of the latter phrase in the other two passages just quoted. And if this be done, the statement before us clearly implies, that in the future state we shall see God without any darkening obstruction, either in the mode of our knowledge, or in the moral condition of our nature. But there is nothing whatever, either in the language here used, or in any other portion of the Bible, which can warrant Sir W. Hamilton's very singular rendering, "then shall I know *without limitation*." Though it is true that God has a full knowledge of us, it is such a knowledge as He can have of our *finite nature*. The only manner in which our knowledge of Him can bear a resemblance to His knowledge of us, is that our knowledge of the Divine Being will not be impaired by any darkness or doubt. But even then our knowledge must still be a limited knowledge, and it must be for ever impossible for man to rise to a knowledge "without limitation."

I have entered somewhat minutely into the examination of this passage, because it affords the Scriptural groundwork from which accurately to test the different views, that have been held concerning Bible teaching, in regard to man's actual and possible knowledge of the Divine Being. The interpretation which I have been led to adopt may be indicated in the following paraphrase: In the *present state*, we see God, though only

darkly, through the aid of the reflection of His glory in His works, and in the words of the written Revelation ; we know God, though our knowledge is only partial, or inadequate : but, in the *future state*, we shall see God in a higher degree, beholding the direct manifestation of His glory ; we shall know Him, without obstruction from any disturbing cause, and with full satisfaction to mind and heart, though it will be only a limited knowledge, capable of continual enlargement. From this passage, then, I conclude that the Bible deals with man as a being who possesses the knowledge of God now ; that this knowledge which we have now is introductory to the knowledge which we shall have hereafter ; and that our knowledge in the future will be simply a higher *degree* of the knowledge we have now. The Bible does not teach that we shall receive new powers of knowledge, when we pass into another world ; or that our cognitive powers will be regulated by different mental *laws*, but only that we shall have a different *moral character*, and shall be placed in *circumstances more favourable* for the knowledge of God, in fact so favourable, that there will be no obstruction whatever, either without or within, to our knowledge of God, save that which belongs essentially to our limited nature. The difference of our knowledge, therefore, will be *twofold : first*, in respect of *outward circumstances*, we shall no longer be restricted to the contemplation of His works and of the words of His written Revelation, but we shall look upon the direct manifestation of the Divine excellence ; and, *secondly*, in respect of *moral character*, we shall no longer be restricted by the imperfections of our sinful nature ; but, in the holi-

ness of our heart, shall have a nature in harmony with the holiness of God. And if this will be the twofold difference in the future state, the very statement of that difference makes it manifest concerning the present state, that we have the powers of knowledge now, which we shall have then; that these powers are guided in their operation now by the same mental laws which shall regulate them then; and that we are not now hindered from possessing a knowledge of God by "the necessary laws of thought," any more than we shall then be restrained by these "necessary laws of thought," though it is true that our knowledge of God in the present state is obstructed by our external circumstances, and by the disordered condition of our moral and spiritual nature.

After having thus carefully examined this passage in the First Epistle to the Corinthians, it is impossible to enter very minutely on the wide field of Biblical research which opens up before us. A few passages by way of illustration must now suffice. Take a single statement of the experience of the man whom, it is said, God "knew face to face." We find Moses saying, "O Lord God, thou hast begun to show thy servant thy greatness, and thy mighty hand: for what God is there in heaven or in earth that can do according to thy works, and according to thy might?"[1] This passage distinctly affirms an increasing knowledge of the greatness of God, and more especially of His infinite power. A single passage may be quoted from the history of another servant of God, who is said to have seen Him face to face. "And Jacob awaked out of his sleep, and he said, Surely the Lord is in this

[1] Deut. iii. 24.

place, and I knew it not. And he was afraid, and said, How dreadful is this place! this is none other but the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven."[1] Singularly enough, as it seems to me, Dr. Mansel uses this passage as a proof that we have no knowledge of the Deity. He says, "The *shadow* of the Infinite still *broods over* the consciousness of the finite; and we awake up at last from the dream of absolute wisdom, to confess, 'Surely the Lord is in this place, and *I knew it not.*'"[2] I am not sure that I understand the meaning of this. It is somewhat difficult to see what is meant by the shadow of the Infinite; or, on the supposition that this shadow is accounted for, what is meant by saying that it "broods over the consciousness of the finite." Nor am I certain whether it is intended that some men, or perhaps all men, have at some time in their life a "dream of absolute wisdom." I can scarce see how such a dream could be possible, according to "the necessary laws of thought." Certainly our author cannot mean that Jacob's dream is to be described as a "dream of absolute wisdom." And when Jacob says, "Surely the Lord is in this place, and *I knew it not*," this last expression is perverted, if it be turned into a testimony in favour of the doctrine, that God cannot be known. If Jacob's words mean anything, they mean that he knew not the presence of God in the place when he lay down to sleep, because God had given no manifestation of Himself, but now *he did know* that God was in the place.

One or two examples may be given of the statements occurring in the New Testament. In the discourse which

[1] Gen. xxviii. 16, 17. [2] *Limits of Religious Thought*, p. 121.

the apostle Paul delivered at Athens, when "certain philosophers of the Epicureans, and of the Stoics, encountered him," we have distinct reference to the knowledge of God. He says, "Ye men of Athens, I perceive that in all things ye are too superstitious. For as I passed by, and beheld your devotions, I found an altar with this inscription, To the Unknown God. Whom therefore ye ignorantly worship, him declare I unto you."[1] To designate God the *unknown* God was in the estimation of the Apostle a proof of sinful ignorance, to be found only in a nation superstitious in feeling and heathen in worship. He, therefore, declares unto them that God, that they might know Him as the only living and true God, and that their worship might be intelligent worship, instead of continuing ignorantly to worship a God, in whose sight such ignorance was a sin. A very different view this, from what is maintained, when it is said that "religion is not a function of thought." The Apostle not only reveals to them the existence of a God above all their gods, but declares the excellency of His nature, in such a way, that they may offer Him an intelligent worship. He proceeds with his discourse in the following language: "God, that made the world, and all things therein, seeing that he is Lord of heaven and earth, dwelleth not in temples made with hands; neither is worshipped with men's hands, as though he needed anything, seeing he giveth to all life, and breath, and all things; and hath made of one blood all nations of men for to dwell on all the face of the earth, and hath determined the times before appointed, and the bounds of their

[1] Acts xvii. 22, 25.

habitation ; that they should *seek* the Lord, if haply they might *feel after him, and find him*, though he be not far from every one of us." This is no mere declaration of what has been called "regulative truth ;" no application of human symbols in such a way, that they may stand as representative of a Divine nature, altogether beyond our knowledge. The Creator of the world, the Lord of heaven and earth, who dwelleth not in temples, and needeth not anything, is a God whom we may "seek," or "feel after," and "find." We may behold the greatness of His nature, we may have our minds filled with awe in His presence, we may offer Him an intelligent worship, and may enter into His favour.

For a reason immediately to appear, I prefer at present confining the quotations to those passages which apply to the knowledge of God among individuals who had not come under the power of the Christian religion. I, therefore, ask attention once more to that portion of the First Chapter of the Epistle to the Romans, which has already been quoted in its application to our belief in the Divine existence, and which must now be considered in its bearing upon the question concerning the knowledge which man has of God. "The wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who hold the truth in unrighteousness ; because *that which may be known of God* (τὸ γνωστὸν τοῦ Θεοῦ) is manifest in them : for *God hath showed it unto them* (αὐτοῖς ἐφανέρωσε). For *the invisible things of him* from the creation of the world *are clearly seen* (καθορᾶται), *being understood* by the things that are made, even his *eternal power and Godhead* (ἥ τε ἀΐδιος αὐτοῦ δύναμις καὶ

θειοτης) ; so that they are without excuse : because that, when they knew God (γνόντες τὸν Θεὸν), they glorified him not as God."[1] Here, then, the Apostle speaks of "that which may be known of God," or as it may be rendered, "the knowable" of the Divine nature—the measure of the Divine excellence which can be known by a finite intelligence. And further, it is added, that what may be known of God, hath been shown unto men by God himself; and that "the invisible things of him," or "his spiritual attributes," as Robinson says, are "clearly seen," or "understood;" and, to place it beyond doubt, that the essential attributes of the Deity are here spoken of, the Apostle mentions "his eternal power and Godhead." Were I to make reference to no other passage but this, in the whole Word of God, I could not hold the doctrine of a merely "regulative knowledge" of the Infinite Being, and I should feel bound to resist to the utmost the reasoning of Sir W. Hamilton and Dr. Mansel.

But further, the *metaphor* and *analogy* applied to the Divine nature in Scripture, presuppose a power in man to recognise the higher truth which they represent. Though the anthropology of Scripture is very abundant, no reader could suppose that he was to rest in such ascriptions of human organs to God. While these are attributed to Him in such a manner as to give greater vividness to our conceptions of God's working, they are used in complete subordination to the statements of the spiritual glory essential to the Divine nature. It is said, that "the Lord hath made bare his holy *arm* in the eyes of all the nations;"[2] that "the *eyes* of the Lord run to and fro

[1] Rom. i. 18-21. [2] Isa. lii. 10.

through the whole earth ;"[1] that "the foundations of the world were discovered, at the rebuking of the Lord, *at the blast of the breath of his nostrils ;*"[2] that "his *lips* are full of indignation, and his *tongue* as a devouring fire ;"[3] and that "the clouds are the dust of his *feet.*"[4] Such expressions as these are very frequently employed throughout the Word of God ; but their interpretation as representative of the spiritual attributes of the Most High is so simple and manifest, that they are symbols easily translated into their higher significance by every reader as he proceeds. No one is found attributing to God arms, eyes, nostrils, lips, tongue, or feet. These expressions are uniformly regarded as revealing the omnipotence, omniscience, justice, and authority of the Divine Being.

When our Lord teaches by *analogy,* his whole mode of instruction implies the capability on the part of man to appreciate the analogy, and this presupposes a knowledge not only of the facts referred to in human life, but also of the higher truth concerning the Deity, else teaching by analogy would mislead rather than instruct. Take the following instance : "There was in a city a judge, who feared not God, neither regarded man : and there was a widow in that city ; and she came unto him saying, Avenge me of mine adversary. And he would not for a while : but afterward he said within himself, Though I fear not God, nor regard man ; yet because this widow troubleth me, I will avenge her, lest by her continual coming she weary me."[5] This was Christ's mode of teaching "that men ought always to pray, and not to

[1] Prov. xxii. 12. [2] 2 Sam. xxii. 16. [3] Isa. xxx. 27.
[4] Nahum i. 3. [5] Luke xviii. 2-5.

faint." The points of analogy here are, authority over the suppliant, power to grant the desire, determination to withhold the answer when the prayer is made, and, finally, determination to grant the answer, because of the continuance of the supplication. All else must be set aside. The injustice of character, the recklessness of disposition, and the total disregard of the widow's desires and feelings, must be placed out of account, as belonging altogether to the human aspect of the case, and so utterly at variance with the Divine nature, that we feel that nothing short of our Lord's sanction could have warranted us in employing the illustration for the sake of those elements of analogy which it contains. It seems to me, indeed, very manifest, that such a parable as this would never have been employed, but for the acknowledged ability of men to recognise the actual truth concerning the Divine nature, which the analogy is fitted to represent. In opposition to Dr. Mansel's assertion, that we have not even "the ability to deny" anything concerning the Infinite Being,[1] it must be obvious that the first requisite for the interpretation of this parable is, "the ability to deny" certain points in it, as having no analogy to the glory of the Deity. We do not recognise in this unjust judge anything which can be held as representative of the Deity, save his sovereignty. And if, from this single point of analogy, we can rise to the contemplation of our God, it presupposes not only a knowledge of the excellencies of His nature, but also capability of advancing in such knowledge, by the application of our faith to the facts of personal experience. The interpre-

[1] *Limits of Religious Thought*, p. 146.

tation of the parable implies a true knowledge of the attributes of the Divine nature, and the parable, when interpreted, teaches not only that, if we pray without ceasing, we shall at length receive an answer; but also that, if we continue unwearied in our supplication, we shall thereby come to a higher knowledge of the true glory of God, than we could otherwise have had.

The Scriptures teach that believers in the Lord Jesus Christ, are distinguished by the possession of a *special knowledge* of the Infinite One. It is everywhere described in the New Testament as the peculiar attainment and blessedness of those who are "renewed in the spirit of their mind," that they rise at once to a fuller and more accurate knowledge of the Deity. A few passages must suffice by way of illustration. In the intercessory prayer, which our Lord presented in behalf of His disciples, before He left the world, we find Him using these words: "This is life eternal, that they might know thee, the only true God (*ἵνα γινώσκωσί σε τὸν μόνον ἀληθινὸν Θεὸν*), and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent."[1] In the words immediately preceding these, our Lord says, that power had been given Him, to grant "eternal life" to as many as God had given Him; and the verse quoted shows what that "eternal life" is. "This is life eternal, that they might know thee, the only true God." These words distinctly imply a knowledge of the Deity; and, besides, such a knowledge of the Deity as they only can reach who are raised to it by the instrumentality of the Saviour. Who are the persons receiving eternal life, is made very obvious. In this prayer, Jesus describes them thus: they

[1] John xvii. 3.

who "have believed that thou didst send me."[1] In another passage, the distinction between them and other men is presented thus: "He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life: and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him."[2] Believers in Jesus Christ, therefore, are the recipients of "eternal life," which involves a knowledge of "the only true God," more extensive and exalted than that which is reached by any man who is an unbeliever in Jesus as the Saviour. In perfect accordance with this view, is the fact that while the Bible declares that all men, even the heathen, know God, it also affirms that "some have not the knowledge of God"[3] (*ἀγνωσίαν Θεοῦ τινὲς ἔχουσι*), that is, do not possess the specially exalted knowledge which belongs only to believers in Christ. The literal rendering is, "Some have *ignorance* of God," and this word "ignorance," signifies wilful ignorance, because of wilful unbelief. On the other hand, we are taught that believers in Jesus not only rise at once to a higher knowledge of God, but are also introduced to a course of progress in this knowledge. Thus we find the apostle Paul praying for the members of the Colossian church, that they may "increase in the knowledge of God."[4]

From this outline of the teaching of Scripture concerning the attainment of those who "are born of the Spirit," these things are manifest, (1.) that the "conditions of thought" do not render a knowledge of God impossible; and (2.) that moral and spiritual elevation is the one requisite, in order that the human mind may have a more exalted knowledge of the Infinite Being.

[1] John xvii. 8. [2] John iii. 36. [3] 1 Cor. xv. 34. [4] Col. i. 10.

The whole teaching of the Word of God seems to me destructive of the doctrine, that the "conditions of knowledge and thought" prevent any knowledge of the Infinite One; and of that other doctrine, that "religion is not a function of thought." And, on the other hand, I humbly think, that the Bible teaches clearly, that the darkness in which we are involved concerning the Deity is moral and spiritual, not intellectual. Quotations might be multiplied indefinitely, were they necessary; but these words must suffice: "We are of God: *he that knoweth God* heareth us; he that is not of God heareth not us. Hereby know we the spirit of truth, and the spirit of error. Beloved, let us love one another: for love is of God; and *every one that loveth* is born of God, and *knoweth God* (*γινώσκει τὸν Θεόν*). He that loveth not, knoweth not God; for God is love."[1] This is an example of the manner in which it is shown in the Scriptures that moral and spiritual darkness gives the explanation of man's ignorance of the Deity. How far away from the Scriptural view of the matter was Sir W. Hamilton, when, in perversion of the particular passage of Scripture alluded to, he said, "The last and highest consecration of all true religion, must be an altar—*Ἀγνώστῳ Θεῷ*—to the unknown and *unknowable* God."[2]

While the Scriptures declare that there will be a higher knowledge of the Infinite Being in the future world, they do not reveal any appointed change in the laws which regulate our intelligence. There is confessedly a large degree of indefiniteness in the revelation of Scrip-

[1] 1 John iv. 6-8. [2] *Discussions*, p. 15.

ture concerning the future state, partly intentional, to check unprofitable curiosity; partly necessary, because of the impossibility of conveying to our mind a conception of what is beyond present experience. Two distinct regions are made known to us, the one a place of woe, the other a place of bliss. It is needful to glance, in conclusion, upon the different parts of the Bible testimony concerning the attainments of the glorified in the heavenly land. It is expressly declared that in the future state there will be a higher knowledge of God. "We know in part, and we prophesy in part. But when that which is perfect is come, then that which is in part shall be done away. . . . For now we see through a glass, darkly; but then face to face: now I know in part; but then shall I know even as also I am known." Such is the statement of the apostle Paul concerning the contrast between the present and the future knowledge of God. That statement has been already considered, and a view given of its real interpretation. As, however, there are distinct facts made known to us in the Bible revelation concerning the attainment of God's people in another world, it may be well to look at them in order.

(*a.*) *In the heavenly land there will be a fuller revelation of the Divine glory.* Before Jesus Christ took leave of His disciples in the world, He said, "In *my Father's house* are many mansions; if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that *where I am, there ye may be also.*"[1] The *place* where the ransomed people are

[1] John xiv. 2, 3.

to dwell, is thus described as his "Father's house," and the "place where he is." What Christ's disciples will behold in that land is indicated in the words of their Master's prayer, when He says, "Father, I will that they also whom thou hast given me be with me where I am; *that they may behold my glory, which thou hast given me.*"[1] The reference here is clearly to a manifestation of the Saviour's glory, such as these disciples had never before seen, though they are found saying, "we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth."[2] And not only will glorified men be in the presence of the Mediator, "God manifest in the flesh;" but also in the presence of God himself. They are "before the throne of God, and serve him day and night in his temple: and he that sitteth on the throne shall dwell among them."[3] "And the city had no need of the sun, neither of the moon, to shine in it; for the glory of God did lighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof."[4] Without venturing upon conjectures regarding points beyond our understanding here, it is clear from the few passages quoted, that in the heavenly land there will be a manifestation of the Divine excellence unspeakably more glorious than the revelation which is given to us in this world. When, therefore, we are taught that we shall there "see face to face," and "know even as also we are known," this is, in part at least, the explanation, that the Infinite Being will then give a far more full *revelation* of Himself.

(*b.*) *In the heavenly land, human nature will be freed from all moral imperfections.* The grand dis-

[1] John xvii. 24. [2] John i. 14. [3] Rev. vii. 15. [4] Rev. xxi. 23.

tinction between heaven as a *state*, and that in which we now exist, is the perfect moral purity possessed by those who are in glory. The want of such purity in the present state is represented as the great hindrance to our knowledge of God. When the Bible declares that in the heavenly land men will rise to a more elevated acquaintance with the glory of the Deity, this is represented as in great part owing to the moral and spiritual elevation of their being, rendering them capable of appreciating the fuller revelation which is afforded. Here we are corrupt by the sinfulness of our hearts ; there we shall be holy as God is holy : here our intellect is restrained and darkened by sin, so that we need to have "the eyes of our understanding enlightened" in order to know what is within our reach at present ; there our intellect will be unrestrained by the power of sin, and "the eyes of our understanding" be clear as the waters of the crystal fountain. The distinction of the heavenly state is that the presence and power of moral evil are completely unknown. "There shall in no wise enter into it any thing that defileth, neither whatsoever worketh abomination, or maketh a lie ; but they which are written in the Lamb's book of life."[1] And so Christ's great work in bringing a ransomed people to His Father's presence, is said to be, to present them "holy and unblameable and unreprovable in his sight ;"[2] to present them "faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy." In thus rising to a state of holiness, men are represented as bearing God's image : "As we have borne the image of the earthly, we shall also bear the image of the

[1] Rev. xxi. 27. [2] Col. i. 22.

heavenly."[1] "We know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him (ὅμοιοι αὐτῷ); for we shall see him as he is" (ὀψόμεθα αὐτὸν καθώς ἐστι).[2] We shall bear his image, as such finite beings can; that is, we shall be perfect in purity, contemplating His holiness with fulness of delight, while He continually affords us direct manifestation of His glory, in harmony with the words previously quoted, "he that sitteth on the throne shall dwell among them." The declaration that we shall *see* him (ὀψόμεθα αὐτὸν) is no contradiction of the Bible doctrine that He is "the invisible God;" but signifies only that we shall know Him. And when it is added, "we shall see him *as he is*" (καθώς ἐστι), it is not meant that we shall see the full measure of His glory, but only that we shall see according to the power which our perfected nature will have, for the contemplation of the Divine excellence. To quote the words of Alford on the passage, "The word (ὀψόμεθα), however understood, has for its limit, that no created eye, even in the glorified body, can behold the Creator: that beyond its keenest search there will be glory and perfection baffling and dazzling it: but this incapacity does not prevent the vision, as far as it can reach, being clear and unclouded: being, to the utmost extent of which our glorified nature is capable, ὡς ἐστίν, a true and not a false vision of God." The full tenor of the passage, therefore, is, that we shall not only have an immediate knowledge of God, but that, being "entirely like Him—ethically like Him"[3]—perfect in holiness, we shall be able to contemplate His glory in a manner impossible in the present state. The human intellect will then be delivered from

[1] 1 Cor. xv. 49. [2] 1 John iii. 2. [3] Alford *in loco.*

all the restraint of sin, and placed in circumstances the most favourable for the development and exercise of all its powers. Our destiny in a future state is thus represented as glorious, chiefly because of these two considerations which have been adduced, that God will then give a higher revelation of Himself, and that we shall be perfect in holiness, and shall feel the manifestation of the Divine excellence to be the chief joy of existence.

(*c.*) *In the heavenly land, human nature will still be finite, and the mind be subject to all the conditions of finite intelligence.* The Bible certainly teaches that our present knowledge of God is much more defective than is necessary to beings possessed of such power as we have; and that future knowledge will be much more elevated in degree. We are not taught that the hindrance to higher attainment here, is to be found in the conditions which belong to our nature as *finite*, but in the moral evil which clings to our nature as *sinful*. This being the case, there is nothing in Divine revelation which implies that the present laws of knowledge and of thought are to be overturned, and other laws substituted for our guidance in reaching a more exalted knowledge. We are taught that we shall be perfect as human creatures, but not that we shall be infinite; that we shall rise to a knowledge unattainable here, but not that we shall know God in the fulness of His glory; that we shall at once be introduced to a grander revelation of the Deity, but not that our entrance into heaven will introduce us to the full measure of knowledge, leaving nothing to be attained thereafter.

We are told that those who dwell in the heavenly

land "are equal to the angels,"[1] and from this statement we may infer somewhat concerning the manner in which we shall exercise our intellectual powers. This equality with the angels plainly refers to the spirituality of nature. In this respect we shall be equal, while we are dwellers together in the same state of existence. There is not, however, any distinct indication that we shall be equal to the angels in intellectual gifts; but, whatever may be true in this respect, there is nothing to warrant the supposition that we shall surpass the angels in powers of knowledge. There are some traces in Scripture of the manner in which the angels exercise their intellectual nature, and of the measure of their knowledge. When the apostle Peter writes concerning the salvation into which "the prophets have inquired and searched diligently," and of the preaching of the gospel "with the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven," he adds, "which things the angels *desire to look into.*"[2] Again, when our Lord speaks of coming judgment, he says, "Of that day and hour knoweth no man; no, *not the angels of heaven*, but my Father only."[3] From these quotations two facts are clearly indicated: *First*, That the angelic intelligence, in acquiring knowledge of God's excellence, is engaged in observation of His works, and reasoning from recognised facts. *Secondly*, That there is not only much hid from the angels, requiring patient study for its discovery, but also much so completely hid that it cannot be discovered by their most careful research. These things being true now, concerning "the angels of heaven," though we be "equal with the angels" when we are saints in heaven,

[1] Luke xx. 36. [2] 1 Peter i. 12. [3] Matt. xxiv. 36.

we shall not have powers of knowledge higher than theirs.

In connexion with our destiny in the future state, it is gratifying that those who have maintained the impossibility of any knowledge of the Infinite Being, very decidedly assert that we shall attain to such knowledge hereafter. Sir W. Hamilton expressly declares this, and Dr. Mansel says, that it is only "so long as we are men upon the earth, and not as the angels in heaven," that it is impossible for us to know God. Indeed, when it is remembered how strongly these authors maintain that the finite mind cannot know the Infinite Being, it is altogether singular what measure of knowledge they assign to man in a future state. To maintain that a knowledge of God will be impossible to men in the future state, is what no believer in the Bible could venture to do; and yet to maintain that such knowledge there will be, is a glaring inconsistency on the part of any upholder of the theory that the finite mind cannot know the Infinite Being. In this way Sir W. Hamilton and Dr. Mansel have preserved their orthodoxy, and have reached the culminating point in their inconsistency.

Sir W. Hamilton's assertion concerning the measure of future knowledge, occurs, as I have mentioned, in the interpretation of a scriptural statement which he quotes. "The Scriptures explicitly declare that the Infinite is for us now incognisable; they declare that the finite, and the finite alone, is within our reach. It is said (to cite one text out of many), that '*now* I know *in part* (*i.e.*, the finite); but *then* (*i.e.*, in the life to come), shall I know even as I am known' (*i.e.*, *without limitation*)."

This, as I have shown, is altogether a perversion of Scripture. But it is maintained as a philosophical doctrine - the climax of the Hamiltonian theory concerning the unconditioned. "In the life to come," we shall know "without limitation!" This from Sir W. Hamilton! If we shall know without limitation, we must ourselves be unlimited, else the limited may know "without limitation," than which there could be no clearer contradiction. Must we, then, suppose that in the future world we shall become infinite? And, if so, shall we coalesce with the Infinite Being, and lose our personality? Or are we to co-exist as infinite beings with the Infinite Ruler? There is no end to the contradictions which spring from such an assertion as this, that in the life to come we shall know without limitation.

Dr. Mansel, in connexion with his assertion of the impossibility of a knowledge of the infinite "so long as we are men upon the earth, and not as the angels in heaven," gives a summary of the obstructions to such knowledge, so long as we are here, all of which must, of course, be removed, according to his theory, in order that we may know God in heaven. I give the passage at full length. "If there be any who think that the laws of thought themselves may change with the changing knowledge of man; that the limitations of Subject and Object, of Duration and Succession, or Space and Time, belong to the vulgar only, and not to the philosopher: if there be any who believe that they can think without the consciousness of themselves as thinking, or of anything about which they think; that they can be in such or such a mental state, and yet for no period of duration; that

they can remember this state, and make subsequent use of it, without conceiving it as antecedent, or as standing in any order of time to their present consciousness; that they can reflect upon God, without their reflections following each other, without their succeeding to any earlier, or being succeeded by any later state of mind: if there be any who maintain that they can conceive Justice and Mercy and Wisdom, as neither existing in a just and merciful and wise Being, nor in any way distinguishable from each other: if there be any who imagine that they can be conscious without variety, or discern without differences; these and these alone may aspire to correct Revelation by the aid of Philosophy; for such alone are the conditions under which Philosophy can attain to a rational knowledge of the Infinite God."[1] I perfectly sympathize with the earnestness of Dr. Mansel's opposition to all who "aspire to correct Revelation by the aid of Philosophy," though, as it seems to me, he has taken a mistaken course to defend Religion from their assaults, and has thrown down a very ineffectual barrier to the continuance of their dangerous speculations. The safety of Religion and Philosophy alike, is to be found in laying down, on clear psychological data, the restrictions of thought, as subordinate to our necessary belief.

But when Dr. Mansel enumerates those characteristics of human thought, which he alleges prevent a knowledge of the Infinite Being now, and thereby indicates what conditions must be removed that we may know God hereafter, he presents a view of the knowledge which belongs to the future state, altogether without Scriptural

[1] *Limits of Religious Thought*, pp. 263-4.

testimony in support of his doctrine. When we are no longer as "men upon the earth," but "as the angels in heaven;" when we are no longer within that period of life which stretches "from the cradle to the grave," but are beyond it; shall we be freed from the laws which now regulate the exercise of our intellectual powers? Upon what authority can such a theory be maintained? Are not these laws a necessary part of our nature; in some respects, at least, essential to all finite intelligence; and not the mere product of present circumstances? Since it is admitted that, in the future world, we shall know God, shall we then "think without the consciousness of ourselves as thinking, or of anything about which we think;" shall we be "in such or such a mental state, and yet for no period of duration;" and shall we "reflect upon God, without our reflections following each other, without their succeeding to any earlier, or being succeeded by any later state of mind"? Anything more thoroughly destitute of authority, and more inconsistent in itself, can hardly be conceived.

It is admitted as beyond dispute concerning the exercise of thought now, that all thinking implies, (1.) a mind which thinks, (2.) an object about which it thinks, and (3.) a conscious relation between the two. Will all this cease when the mind passes into another stage of its existence? If men can know God, only when "they can think without the consciousness of themselves as thinking, or of anything about which they think," what is the consequence? Either they must be identified with God, and lose their individuality, in which case *they* do not know God; or God must be identified with them, and lose his

individuality (a monstrous supposition!), in which case, God is not known. These are the only possibilities, if we are to be "conscious without variety, or discern without differences." The absence of all "variety" or "difference," must be identity. And on this hypothesis concerning knowledge in the future, we shall not be "as the angels in heaven," for we are told that there are certain things which they "desire to look into," and they must recognise these things as distinct from themselves, that is, they must be conscious with variety, and discern with differences, while they unquestionably know God.

The inconsistencies of this theory, concerning knowledge in the future state, multiply as we advance in the consideration of the conditions of thought which, it is said, must be removed in order that we may know God. For such a knowledge we must be able to be "in such or such a mental state, and yet for no period of duration," and able to "remember this state, and make subsequent use of it, without conceiving it as antecedent, or as standing in any order of time to our present consciousness." Is it by such a radical change in our mental constitution, that we are hereafter to be "as the angels in heaven"? Then, when these angels "desire to look into" certain things, that desire can never be gratified, since "looking" would occupy a "period of duration;" or, if it were gratified, the results of their observation could not be remembered by them, since that would make their previous mental occupation stand in a certain "order of time to their present consciousness;" and they can make no progress in knowledge, since such progress would imply a certain degree of knowledge "as antecedent," and a

wider degree of knowledge as subsequent. On such a theory, perhaps it should be said, that the angels cannot be supposed to desire anything, since such a desire would involve existence in a mental state for a certain period of duration, and though these angels are to exist for ever, it would be inconsistent with their nature to occupy any "period of duration," "in such or such a mental state." What shall be said of a philosophical doctrine which leads to such results as these! Humbly, but decidedly, do I reject it, as unwarranted in Philosophy, and contradicted by Scripture.

I believe that when the gates of heaven are passed by any human spirit, a revelation of the Divine glory, inconceivable to us in our present state, is presented to view; and that the soul, on entering the abodes of bliss, is perfect in holiness. That soul continues to exercise its intellectual power, under the laws which now regulate its operations; and, more especially, knows God, in recognising the Deity as distinct from itself; continues in a course of eternal progress, in which each mental state occupies a certain period of duration, and is distinguished from that which preceded it, and from that which follows it; and, at every point in the ceaseless advancement, remembers its previous experience as "antecedent" to the measure of attainment reached in present consciousness.

CHAPTER XI.

CONCLUDING STATEMENT.

The general conclusion adopted on the merits of the controversy concerning the possibility of a knowledge of the Infinite Being, must involve the most important practical results both in Philosophy and in Theology. The literature of both must take one of two diverging currents, according as it is held that man has no knowledge of the Deity, or that the Infinite Being is known to us. If the former view be adopted, it must in truth be announced that the literature of Philosophy and Theology is greatly overgrown, stretching its long boughs into forbidden territory, calling for the immediate use of a strong and sharp pruning-knife. Philosophers must now write books to prove that too many books in Philosophy have been written, and that their predecessors have reasoned at great length on matters utterly beyond the power of man to conceive. Philosophy must content itself with recording the fact that the human mind has a necessary belief in the Infinite Being; while, by clearly pointing out the conditions of knowledge and thought, it demonstrates that we can know nothing of His nature, and understand nothing of His government. Theology must surrender its stores of systematic doctrinal dissertation, and acknow-

ledge that all that has been written concerning the holiness and justice and mercy of the Deity must be considered baseless speculation, by which thousands have been betrayed into presumptuous intermeddling with things too high for them. Such must be the fruit which the tree will yield, if the pruning-knife of the philosophy of ignorance be applied to literature. That such devastation will be tolerated, I cannot imagine; that either Sir W. Hamilton or Dr. Mansel has presented anything approaching sufficient ground for the restrictions they have attempted to impose on philosophical inquiry, I altogether deny; those barriers, whether logical or metaphysical in nature, which they have thrown in the way of further research and speculation, I have made an honest attempt to help in removing; that the sphere of knowledge and thought concerning the Infinite Being is open to those who approach with reverent footsteps, it is my joy to believe; and that I have drawn at least the outline of a sound philosophy of the Infinite, based on consciousness, I hope may yet appear, as the issue of a searching and just criticism.

The roots of such a philosophy are deep in the mental constitution of man, in the form of a necessary belief, which soon sends up through the young and cultivated soil a vigorous shoot. This first growth gains strength through all the vicissitudes of mental experience, until it attains to the stature of a goodly tree, sending forth its branches over all parts of the field of scientific research. And its destiny is, not to wither and then decay, but to be transplanted in the very soil in which it grows, to another region, where, under the balmy atmosphere of an eternal

summer, and in a soil then cleared of every impurity, and far more highly cultivated, it will flourish for ever.

The simple outline of such an imperfect philosophy of the Infinite as man can have, may be given within very short compass. We have in the mind, as the very basis of our fundamental convictions, a necessary belief in the Infinite Being. When this belief arises in consciousness, asserting the *existence* of the Deity, it necessarily involves an original knowledge of His *nature*. There cannot be given to us a belief that God is, without some knowledge of what He is, because we can believe in an existence, only as we can distinguish it from other existences. Knowledge in some degree there must be, though it is not essential that such knowledge be complete. As, however, our belief arises, only when the facts of observation, or the inquiries of the understanding, are contemplated in such manner as to require it; so is it, in like manner, that we become conscious of our knowledge of His excellence. All finite existence presents the facts requiring the application of our faith; and, as such existence is believed to be the work of God's power, so it affords the illustrations of the Divine nature, in the contemplation of which our knowledge expands.

It is proper that I should, before concluding, present Dr. Mansel's criticism of this theory as a whole, and the reply which I have to offer. He says, "An able attempt has recently been made by Mr. Calderwood to re construct in opposition to the theory of Sir W. Hamilton, a Philosophy of the Absolute on the basis of consciousness. While admitting the ability of Mr. Calderwood's work, and the merit of many of his details, I cannot help

thinking that he has failed in his main purpose. He defines the Absolute, which he rightly identifies with the Infinite, as 'that which is free from all necessary relation;' it 'may exist in relation, provided that relation be not a necessary condition of its existence.' Hence he holds that the Absolute may exist in the relation of consciousness, and in that relation be apprehended though imperfectly by man. On this theory, we have two Absolutes: the Absolute as it exists out of consciousness, and the Absolute as it is known in consciousness. Mr. Calderwood's theory rests on the assumption that these two are one. How is this identity to be ascertained? How do I know that *the* Absolute, is *my* Absolute? I cannot compare them; for comparison is a relation, and the first Absolute exists out of relation. Again, to compare them, I must be in and out of consciousness at the same time; for the first Absolute is never in consciousness, and the second is never out of it. Again, the Absolute as known is an object of consciousness; and an object of consciousness, as such, cannot exist save in relation. But the true Absolute, by its definition, can exist out of relation, therefore, the Absolute, as known, is not the true Absolute. Mr. Calderwood's Absolute in consciousness is only the Relative under a false name."[1]

Two Absolutes! and my theory "rests on the assumption that these two are one!" There is mistake here. There are not two Absolutes in my theory, and therefore it cannot rest "on the assumption that *these two* are one." The ingenious criticism of Dr. Mansel misses the mark. Because I maintain that we have a knowledge

[1] *Lecture on the Philosophy of Kant*, p. 38.

of the Absolute, Dr. Mansel argues that such professed knowledge, implies an Absolute "as it exists out of consciousness," and "an Absolute as it is known in consciousness." If such reasoning has any value, it must be on the principle, that all knowledge implies an object in consciousness, and an object out of it. The application of such a principle will lead to very novel results in philosophy. If I say that I know a certain person, does that imply that there is a person in my consciousness, and a person out of my consciousness, and that these two are one? There can be no knowledge except in consciousness, but the objects known, though they be said to be objects *of* consciousness, are not themselves *in* consciousness. Consciousness is the sphere in which all mental operations exist, but not a sphere into which external realities are introduced, when known. While, then, it seems plain that to assert a knowledge of the Absolute, does not imply that there is an Absolute in consciousness, I do maintain that the mind is capable of being engaged with the Absolute, as an object of knowledge.

If, then, I am asked, how we are assured that the object known is the Absolute, the question is a reasonable one. I refer exclusively to the authority of *faith*, for the assurance that the object known is the Absolute Being. It is on a necessary belief that my theory rests, and not on the assumption that an Absolute within, and another without, are one. Since we have a necessary belief, assuring us that the Absolute Being exists, *that belief itself* involves a necessary knowledge of the Absolute Being; and this necessary knowledge is con-

firmed and expanded by the contemplation of the works of the Absolute Being. This is the chain, formed, as it seems to me, with the utmost philosophical consistency, and which I continue to think cannot be broken.

The last point in Dr. Mansel's criticism is as ineffectual as the first. His argument is this: "An object of consciousness, as such, cannot exist save in relation; but the true Absolute, by its definition, can exist out of relation; therefore, the Absolute, as known, is not the true Absolute." The first proposition, if fully stated, would stand thus,—Any existence can be an object of consciousness only inasmuch as it comes into relation with the mind. The truth of the proposition, thus stated, is very manifest, but it determines nothing whatever concerning the *existence* of the object, it simply describes when we can be *conscious* of its existence. It is as true of the Absolute, as of every other existence, that it can be an object of consciousness, only if it come into relation with the mind. But it is a totally different assertion which is covertly implied, when the proposition is stated in the terms given in the above quotation, where it is said,—"An object of consciousness, as such, *cannot exist* out of relation." It is quite true that it cannot exist out of relation, and at the same time be an object of consciousness, but that truth is of no value in the argument. Every external object of consciousness can exist out of that relation which our consciousness implies, and so may the Absolute. Does Dr. Mansel mean to affirm that after an existence has come into relation with our consciousness, it cannot again exist out of that relation? He cannot mean anything so very

extraordinary, and yet he must mean this in order to secure the validity of his argument. The incoherence of the reasoning will be apparent if the only justifiable signification of the first proposition be presented in other terms. It will stand thus: Any existence can be an object of consciousness, only inasmuch as it comes into relation with the mind, but the true Absolute can exist out of relation, therefore the Absolute as known is not the true Absolute. The professed argument is no argument at all. The only legitimate conclusion to be drawn from the two propositions is, that the relation to our mind implied in the consciousness of an object, cannot be essential to the Absolute. It is certainly true that the Absolute *can exist* out of relation; but, it *may exist* as an object of our consciousness, and the former truth be untouched. Objects known as distinct from self *can all exist* out of the relation of our consciousness, and Dr. Mansel's argument fails, which seeks to infer from the relation of consciousness, that its object cannot be the Absolute.

The whole argument which has been brought to bear against the position, that we do in our present state possess a knowledge of the Infinite Being, seems to me a failure. From the necessary relation subsisting in the mind between faith and knowledge, I regard an original knowledge of the Deity as a necessity of our being, and hold that such knowledge is capable of indefinite expansion, in harmony with the admitted laws of mind. To quote the language of Howe, in his answer to Spinoza, when accounting for apparent ignorance of the Deity on the part of many, — "Were it not for slothful

neglect of most to study themselves . . . they might take notice without being told, that . . . they can form a conception, however imperfect, of this absolutely perfect Being whereof we are discoursing, which even they that acknowledge not its existence cannot deny, except they will profess themselves blindly and at a venture to deny they know not what, or what they have not so much as thought of."[1] And, once more, from the same author, "Let them that judge the notion of infiniteness inconsistent, therefore, reject it if they can. They will feel it re-imposing itself upon them whether they will or no, and sticking as close to their minds as their very thinking power itself."[2] I prefer rather to agree with the doctrine of Butler, in his *Analogy*, that along with "the moral nature which God has given us," there is in the mind a "natural notion of Him as righteous governor of those His creatures to whom He has given this nature;"[3] than hold with Sir W. Hamilton and Dr. Mansel, that there is no such natural notion. I accept, as harmonizing in every way with our mental constitution, the argument of Butler: "As our understanding can contemplate itself, and our affections be exercised upon themselves by reflection, so may each be employed in the same manner upon any other mind; and, since the Supreme Mind, the Author and Cause of all things, is the highest possible object to Himself, He may be an adequate supply to all the faculties of our souls, a subject to our understanding, and an object to our affections."[4] Such is the sound teaching of Butler, and I

[1] *Living Temple*, part i. chap. iii. sec. 11.
[2] *Ibid.* part. i. chap. iv. sec. 8.
[3] *Analogy of Religion*, part i. ch. iii.
[4] Sermon xiv.

humbly apprehend that nothing has been done to lessen its force by the upholders of the theory of "philosophical ignorance," in their attempts to maintain that "the knowledge of nothing is the principle or result of all true philosophy."

In holding that there is a necessary relation between faith and knowledge, and that our original belief in the Divine existence implies a knowledge of the Divine nature, a consistent philosophical doctrine is presented which gives warrant for the free and reverent exercise of all our powers of observation, research, and reasoning, that we may enlarge the measure of our acquaintance with the nature and the government of the Deity. It is with a sense of relief and gladness, that I rest in the distinct conviction that this field is legitimately open to us, notwithstanding all the attempts which have been made to close it entirely. Far beyond the range of present knowledge, is the grand truth concerning the glory of the Infinite Being to which faith bears testimony within us. But we have a knowledge in harmony with our faith, and the power to extend that knowledge, by the contemplation of all the aspects of that revelation which God has given of Himself in the present state. It is the high mission of a humble but earnest philosophy to carry forward the acquisitions of knowledge still further into the region of faith. This is the ceaseless task of the race, so long as we are permitted, in the exercise of our intelligence, to behold the works of the great Creator. However far the extent of our knowledge may be advanced by any inquirers, the results which they attain only widen the circumference, from which others may take their start.

In observing, reflecting, and reasoning in this lofty region, the highest importance seems to me to belong to the three fundamental maxims previously laid down: (1.) The harmony of faith and knowledge is to be sought to the utmost extent to which the understanding can carry us; (2.) That which is clearly inconsistent with our faith, may be pronounced contradictory of the Divine nature; (3.) That which is apparently irreconcilable with our faith, cannot be pronounced contradictory of the Divine nature.

The *first* of these maxims indicates not only the warrant to seek a knowledge of the Infinite Being, but also the *method* in which we must proceed. All inquiry and reasoning must be prosecuted under the guidance of faith, and must tend towards this as its result, a wider discovery of the harmony of the facts of observation, and the deductions of the understanding, with the testimony of our belief. In accordance with this maxim, we regard all the works of God spread out before us, as illustrations of His nature, from the study of which we may rise to a fuller acquaintance with the Divine glory. Every form of finite existence, from the lowest to the highest, has a significance concerning the nature of the Infinite Creator. The facts which all men see, are facts which have a testimony to bear for God. Physical and Mental Sciences disclose fields of observation, upon which the believer in the Deity may enter reverently, in the assurance of having his knowledge of the Infinite Being enlarged. All these have a value to us in this relation, apart from their distinctive worth as sciences; and to all those which are still very partially developed, we look with peculiar in-

terest, in the conviction, that they have yet many facts to disclose, still further illustrative of truth already known, or indicative of higher truth hitherto unrecognised. And, above all sciences, stand the Scriptures with their inexhaustible treasure, from which many things of high value are yet to be brought forth by the hands of diligent workers in this the richest of all the mines which have been opened to us in this earthly state.

The *second* maxim points out the truth, that there is a wide sphere within which we can affirm unhesitatingly, and reason with perfect certainty, concerning the nature of the Infinite Being. That which is *clearly inconsistent* with our faith, may be pronounced *contradictory* of the Divine nature. Here, as in every department, faith is our guide, and it is one of the valuable appliances to which it can be put by us, as its intelligent possessors, to save ourselves from error in thought and feeling concerning the Deity. It is on this maxim, that we denounce the Polytheism of ancient Greece and Rome; lament the Idolatry of modern heathenism; sweep aside with equal ease, and unmingled condemnation, all Atheistic and Pantheistic reasonings; overturn, as irrational, all misnamed Rationalism, which ventures to restrict by a theory the power of the Almighty; and search out for repudiation all traces of Materialism in the teaching or the worship of modern times. From all these, the necessary belief given to us in our mental constitution, completely delivers us. And, on the same authority, we are enabled to set aside as fallacious, all reasoning which assumes the complete similarity, and neglects the revealed distinction, between the attributes of our finite mind, and

of the Infinite Intelligence. If any one reason as if Divine *justice* were identical with human justice, and as if the dealing of the Supreme Ruler with His subject creatures, must be exactly similar to the dealing which justice requires between man and man, we can discover with certainty a fallacy in the reasoning. And the power given to us, by our original belief, to judge of reasoning concerning Divine justice, is equally applicable to reasoning regarding the Divine goodness, or mercy, or any other of the Divine attributes, to which faith bears witness.

The *third* maxim indicates the one grand lesson which comes from the manifest limits of our powers of knowledge and of thought. While faith is the guide in all our acquisition of knowledge, it testifies to truth which far outstretches our cognitive power. The human mind, therefore, has naturally within its own sphere the means sufficient to lead the intellect to raise problems, though there are not within that sphere the means by which to solve these problems. While the province of faith is much more extended than that of knowledge, there must be *mysteries* before the mind. All mysteries are the product of these two facts ; a *power* to discover a difficulty, and a *powerlessness* to solve it. They are problems which our intellects raise, but the solution of which cannot be discovered, not from any want of observation or reflection upon materials within reach, but manifestly and essentially from the limits of our mind, when dealing with the materials we have. Our intellects, in starting the questions, point in the direction in which the solution is to be found, although they are unable to proceed in

the direction indicated, far enough to discover it. We are holding the threads which have somewhere a firm fastening, although we can see but a little way along the line in which they stretch. Of these recognised mysteries, some are capable of solution to our intellect, some incapable of any such solution. In so far as they arise, because of the insufficiency of the facts presented to our view in this world, they are of such a nature, that our difficulties may be removed by the presentation of additional facts in another world. In so far as they spring from the fact that our mind is finite, and the object of knowledge and faith Infinite, they must continue mysteries for ever.

While, therefore, we prosecute our inquiries concerning the Infinite Being, in accordance with the first maxim, this third maxim saves us from dogmatizing, where recognised facts are not sufficient to warrant us in drawing any conclusion. If we are conscious that we are free, yet believe that God is Absolutely Sovereign, we are not warranted to affirm that these are contradictory; but must hold, on the authority of our faith, that they are reconcilable, in some way at present beyond our understanding. When we recognise moral evil abounding in the world, and believe that God is Absolutely Holy, we cannot conclude that these two are antagonistic, but must believe quite the contrary. When we behold the distressing forms of human suffering, and consider all the perplexing questions which these raise, yet believe in the Absolute Goodness of God, we cannot legitimately question the possibility of any harmony between the two, but must hold that such harmony is certain. It is on the clearest

ground, in every way satisfying to our understanding, that we allow all such problems as these to stand unsolved. As the late much loved and highly gifted Dr. George Wilson of Edinburgh was wont to say, such difficulties in human speculation are like knotted cords let down from heaven. We can hold the cord, and feel the knots, but we must have *both ends* of the cord, before we can undo these knots.

While, then, the numerous perplexities attendant on human speculation must debar us from all dogmatic assertion concerning those problems, for the solution of which we do not possess sufficient materials; they will not by any means damp the ardour of our desire to know more, nor hinder us from an earnest and humble attempt to advance the boundary of our knowledge, however arduous the task, and however slow the progress. But the number and the force of such perplexities are sufficient to present a strong plea in behalf of a charitable latitude for free thought and discussion, so long as the views advanced are not manifestly contradictory of our belief. There can, indeed, be no place for the charity of a "multitudinist" theory, recently promulgated in our country, which would embrace all belief and all unbelief. If, indeed, it is to be admitted that we can have no knowledge whatever of the Infinite Being, that the "knowledge of *nothing* is the principle or result of all true philosophy," that our faith has no speculative significance, but is inapplicable for the guidance of thought; if, on these grounds, it is to be allowed that any guess may be as near to the truth, or as far from it, as any other, without our being able to tell; then, but not

till then, will there be hope for the "multitudinist" doctrine of charity. But if we have a faith sufficient to involve knowledge and to guide thought, the "multitudinist" doctrine is doomed, and we have clear ground from which to claim a reasonable latitude for independent thought, and encouragement enough to resume, in all quietness and perseverance, our arduous studies on the most perplexing themes. We rejoice now in that which, on authority equally Philosophical and Scriptural, is to us "the knowable of God,"—τὸ γνωστὸν τοῦ Θεοῦ; we desire here, under the guidance of a necessary belief, and the authority of a Divine Revelation, to advance our acquaintance with that which may be known; and if hereafter the gates of heaven are thrown open to us, and we are freed from the restraints of this frail body, and from the darkening clouds of moral evil, a more glorious manifestation of the Divine excellence will be spread out before us, the territory of the Knowable will be immensely extended, and upon it we shall then be more capable of gazing.

APPENDIX.

APPENDIX.

APPENDIX A.

SIR WILLIAM HAMILTON'S LETTER TO THE AUTHOR ON RECEIPT OF FIRST EDITION.

(*Printed also in Hamilton's Metaphysical Lectures*, vol. ii. pp. 530-535.)

"CORDALE, *26th Sept.* 1854.

"MY DEAR SIR,—I received a few days ago your *Philosophy of the Infinite*, and beg leave to return you my best thanks, both for the present of the book itself and for the courteous manner in which my opinions are therein controverted. The ingenuity with which your views are maintained does great credit to your metaphysical ability; and however I may differ from them, it gives me great satisfaction to recognise the independence of thought by which they are distinguished, and to acknowledge the candid spirit in which you have written.

"At the same time I regret that my doctrines (briefly as they are promulgated on this abstract subject) have been now again so much mistaken, more especially in their theological relations. In fact, it seems to me that your admissions would, if adequately developed, result in establishing the very opinions which I maintain, and which you so earnestly set yourself to controvert.

"In general, I do not think you have taken sufficiently into account the following circumstances:—

"1°. That the Infinite which I contemplate is considered only as *in thought*, the Infinite beyond thought being, it may be, an object of belief but not of knowledge. This consideration obviates many of your objections.

"2°. That the sphere of our belief is much more extensive than the sphere of our knowledge; and, therefore, when I deny that the Infinite can by us be *known*, I am far from denying that by us it is, must, and ought to be *believed*. This I have, indeed, anxiously evinced both by reasoning and authority. When, therefore, you maintain that, in denying to man any positive cognisance of the

Infinite, I virtually extenuate his belief in the infinitude of Deity, I must hold you to be wholly wrong in respect both of my opinion and of the theological dogma itself.

"Assuredly, I maintain that an infinite God cannot be by us (positively) comprehended. But the Scriptures, and all theologians worthy of the name, assert the same. Some indeed of the latter, and, among them, some of the most illustrious Fathers, go the length of asserting, that 'an understood God is no God at all,' and that, 'if we maintain God to be as we can think that He is, we blaspheme.' Hence the assertion of Augustin: 'Deum potius ignorantia quam scientia attingi.'

"3°. That there is a fundamental difference between *The Infinite* (τὸ Ἓν καὶ Πᾶν), and a relation to which we may apply the term *infinite*. Thus, Time and Space must be excluded from the supposed notion of *The Infinite;* for the Infinite, if positively thought it could be, must be thought as under neither Space nor Time.

"But I would remark specially on some essential points of your doctrine, and these I shall take up without order, as they present themselves to my recollection.

"You maintain (*passim*) that thought, conception, knowledge, is and must be finite, whilst the *object of thought*, etc., may be infinite. This appears to me to be erroneous and even contradictory. An existence can only be an object of thought, conception, knowledge, inasmuch as it is an object thought, conceived, known; as such only does it form a constituent of the circle of thought, conception, knowledge. A thing may be partly known, conceived, thought, partly unknown, etc. But that part of it only which is thought, can be an object of thought, etc.; whereas the part of it not thought, etc., is, as far as thought, etc., is concerned, only tantamount to zero. The Infinite, therefore, in this point of view, can be *no object* of thought, etc.: for nothing can be more self-repugnant than the assertion, that we know the infinite through a finite notion, or have a finite knowledge of an infinite object of knowledge.

"But you assert (*passim*) that we have a knowledge, a notion of the infinite; at the same time asserting (*passim*) that this knowledge or notion is 'inadequate,' 'partial,' 'imperfect,' 'limited,' 'not in all its extent,' 'incomplete,' 'only to some extent,' 'in a certain sense,' 'indistinct,' etc. etc.

"Now, in the first place, this assertion is in contradiction of what you also maintain, that 'the infinite is one and indivisible' (pp. 25, 26, 226); that is, having *no parts*, it cannot be *partially* known. But, in the second place, this also subverts the possibility of conceiving, of knowing, the Infinite; for as partial, inadequate, not in all its extent, etc., our conception includes *some part* of the object supposed infinite, and *does not include* the rest.

Our knowledge is, therefore, by your own account, limited and finite; consequently, you implicitly admit that we have no knowledge, at least no positive knowledge, of the Infinite.

"Neither can I surmise how we should ever come to know that the object thus partially conceived *is* in itself infinite; seeing that we are denied the power of knowing it *as* infinite, that is, not partially, not inadequately, not in some parts only of its extent, etc., but totally, adequately, in its whole extent, etc.; in other words, under the criteria compatible with the supposition of infinitude. For, as you truly observe, 'everything *short* of the infinite is limited' (p. 223).

"Again, as stated, you describe the infinite to be 'one and indivisible.' But, to conceive as inseparable into *parts*, an entity which, not excluding, in fact includes, the worlds of mind and matter, is for the human intellect utterly improbable. And does not the infinite contain the finite? If it does, then it contains what has parts, and is divisible; if it does not, then it is exclusive; the finite is out of the infinite; and the infinite is conditioned, limited, restricted,—*finite*.

"You controvert (p. 233, alibi) my assertion, that to conceive a thing *in relation* is, *ipso facto*, to conceive it as finite, and you maintain that the relative is not incompatible with infinity, unless it be also restrictive. But restrictive I hold the relative always to be, and, therefore, incompatible with *The Infinite* in the more proper signification of the term, though infinity, in a looser signification, may be applied to it. My reasons for this are the following:—A relation is always a *particular* point of view; consequently, the things thought as relative and correlative are always thought restrictively, in so far as the thought of the one discriminates and excludes the other, and likewise all things not conceived in the same special or relative point of view. Thus, if we think of Socrates and Xanthippe under the matrimonial relation, not only do the thoughts of Socrates and Xanthippe exclude each other as separate existences, and, *pro tanto*, therefore are restrictive; but thinking of Socrates *as husband*, this excludes our conception of him as citizen, etc. etc. Or, to take an example from higher relatives: what is thought as the *object*, excludes what is viewed as the *subject*, of thought, and hence the necessity which compelled Schelling and other absolutists to place *The Absolute* in the indifference of subject and object, of knowledge and existence. Again, we conceive God in the relation of Creator, we do not conceive Him as unconditioned, as infinite; for there are many other relations of the Deity under which we may conceive Him, but which are not included under the relation of Creator. In so far, therefore, as we conceive God only in this relation, our conception of Him is manifestly restrictive. Further, the created universe is,

and you assert it to be (pp. 175, 180, 229), finite. The creation is, therefore, an act, however great, of finite power; and the Creator is thus only thought in a finite capacity. God in His own nature is infinite, but we do not positively think Him as infinite in thinking Him under the relation of the Creator of a finite creation. Finally, let us suppose the created universe (which you do not) to be infinite; in that case we should be reduced to the dilemma of asserting *two* infinites, which is contradictory, or of asserting the supernal absurdity that God the Creator is finite, and the universe created by Him is infinite.

"In connexion with this, you expressly deny Space and Time to be restrictions, whilst you admit them to be necessary conditions of thought (pp. 103-117). I hold them both to be restrictive.

"In the first place, take *Space*, or Extension. Now, what is conceived as extended? Does it not exclude the unextended? Does it not include body to the exclusion of mind? *Pro tanto*, therefore, space is a limitation, a restriction.

"In the same way *Time*—is it not restrictive in excluding the Deity, who must be held to exist above or beyond the condition of time or succession? This, His existence, we must believe as real, though we cannot positively think, conceive, understand its possibility. Time, like Space, thus involving limitation, both must be excluded, as has been done by Schelling, from the sphere—from the supposed notion of the infinito-absolute,

'Whose kingdom is where Time and Space are not.'

"You ask if we had not a positive notion of the thing, how such a name as *infinite* could be introduced into language (p. 58)? The answer to this is easy. In the first place, the word *infinite* (*infinitum*, απειρον) is negative, expressing the negation of limits; and I believe that this, its negative character, holds good in all languages. In the second place, the question is idle; for we have many words which, more directly and obtrusively expressing a negation of thought, are extant in every language, as *incogitable*, *unthinkable*, *incomprehensible*, *inconceivable*, *unimaginable*, *nonsense*, etc. etc.; whilst the term *infinite* directly denotes only the negation of limits, and only indirectly a negation of thought.

"I may here notice what you animadvert on (pp. 60, 76), the application of the term *notion*, etc., to what cannot be positively conceived. At best this is merely a verbal objection against an abuse of language, but I hardly think it valid. The term *notion* can, I think, be not improperly applied to what we are unable positively to construe in thought, and which we understand only by a problematic supposition. A *round square* cannot certainly be represented; but understanding what is hypothetically required, the union of the attribute *round* with the attribute *square*, I may

surely say, 'the notion round-square is a representative impossibility.'

"You misrepresent, in truth, reverse my doctrine in saying (p. 169) that I hold 'God *cannot* act as a cause, for the unconditioned cannot exist in relation.' I never denied, or dreamed of denying, that the Deity, though infinite, though unconditioned, *could* act in a finite relation. I only denied, in opposition to Cousin, that so He *must*. True it is, indeed, that in thinking God under relation, we do not *then* think Him, even negatively, as infinite; and in general, whilst always believing Him to be infinite, we are ever unable to construe to our minds—positively to conceive—His attribute itself of infinity. This is 'unsearchable.' This is 'past finding out.' What I have said as to the infinite being (subjectively) inconceivable, does not at all derogate from our belief of its (objective) reality. In fact, the main scope of my speculation is to show articulately, that we *must believe* as actual much that we are unable (positively) *to conceive* as even possible.

"I should have wished to make some special observations on your seventh chapter in relation to Causality; for I think your objections to my theory of causation might be easily obviated. Assuredly that theory applies equally to mind and matter. These, however, I must omit. But what can be more contradictory than your assertion 'that creation is conceived, and is by us conceivable, only as *the origin of existence* by the fiat of the Deity?' (p. 156.) Was the *Deity not existent before the creation?* or did the *non-existent Deity at the creation originate existence?* I do not dream of imputing to you such absurdities. But you must excuse me in saying that there is infinitely less ground to wrest my language (as you seem to do) to the assertion of a material Pantheism than to suppose you guilty of them.

"Before concluding, I may notice your denial (p. 108) of my statement, that time present is conceivable only as a line in which the past and future limit each other. As a portion of time (time is a protensive quantity), the present, if positively conceived, must have a certain duration, and that duration can be measured and stated. Now, does the present endure for an hour, a minute, a second, or any part of a second? If you state what length of duration it contains you are lost. So true is the observation of St. Augustin.

"These are but a few specimens of the mode in which I think your objections to my theory of the Infinite may be met. But, however scanty and imperfect, I have tired myself in their dictation, and must, therefore, now leave them, without addition or improvement, to your candid consideration.—Believe me, my dear Sir, very truly yours, (Signed) W. HAMILTON."

HEADS OF A REPLY TO SIR W. HAMILTON'S LETTER.

As the discussions on the subject of the present volume have now reached a stage where it is of consequence to summarize the points of agreement and disagreement, I prefer to set down heads of reply, rather than continue the detailed criticism of the foregoing letter, as contained in the former Edition.

The *first part* of the discussion is concerned with the NATURE OF THE INFINITE AND ABSOLUTE.

The doctrine of Sir W. Hamilton is, that the Absolute and Infinite are different (*Discussions*, p. 13); that an Infinite Being does exist (*sup.* 498); and that the Infinite, viewed in the abstract, must include the finite (*sup.* 499). The doctrine here maintained is, that the Infinite Being is an Absolute Being, distinct from all finite existence. The following are the heads of vindication :—

1. An Infinite Being is the only Absolute Being, for limitation is restriction.

2. If the Infinite and Absolute are one, the Infinite cannot include the finite, that is, the restricted, consequently the Infinite is not τὸ Ἓν καὶ Πᾶν.

3. Exclusion of limitation from the nature of an Infinite Being is no restriction, for such exclusion is identical with absoluteness.

4. If limited being and the Infinite Being exist in distinction from each other, yet in relation, this implies for all finite existence restriction in relation, as well as in nature; and it equally implies for the Infinite Being supremacy, that is, the negation of restriction, in relation, as well as absoluteness in nature. To say that "the finite is *out* of the infinite," that is, *outside of* it, is to attribute to both the property of extension.

The *second part* of the discussion is concerned with the KNOWLEDGE OF THE INFINITE BEING.

Here there are three points of agreement.

1. That all our knowledge is finite.

2. That comprehension, or adequate knowledge, of the Infinite Being is impossible for us.

3. That we have a belief in the infinitude of Deity.

Beyond these, divergence begins. The doctrine of Sir W. Hamilton is, that the limitation of our knowledge implies the impossibility of any knowledge of the Infinite Being, that is, of the infinitude of His attributes. The doctrine here maintained is, that the limitation which pertains to knowledge does not hinder our recognition of the Infinite Being, while the affirmation of the existence of the Deity makes it impossible, without contradiction, to think of Him as finite.

The heads of argument in support of this doctrine are these :—

1. *Knowledge* is not the measure of its object. It can be said to be so only when knowledge is full or complete. Then it may be said, that the knowledge is as the object is. Our knowledge is, no doubt, limited, but so is our belief, and as faith is not the measure of its object, so neither is knowledge. Again : —We do not think an object, but only think about it; and such thoughts as we entertain can in no sense be regarded as a measure of the object itself.

2. *A partial knowledge* of an object is not a knowledge of a part. Incomplete or partial knowledge of the whole is not obtained by clear knowledge of a part, or even of several parts.

3. *All belief implies knowledge.* This is really so far granted by Sir W. Hamilton, inasmuch as he has placed belief among the cognitive powers, and seems thus to allow some apprehension of the infinitude of God, though he has not shown how this is to be reconciled with the doctrine that the Infinite is incognisable, as well as inconceivable. Dr. Mansel, seeing the difficulty, has given us the following important passage :—"The immediate object of Belief is a proposition which I hold to be true, not a *thing* apprehended in an act of conception. I believe in an infinite God, *i.e.* I believe *that* God is infinite; I believe that the attributes which I ascribe to God exist in Him in an infinite degree. Now, to believe this proposition, I must of course be conscious of its meaning, but I am not therefore conscious of the Infinite God as an object of conception" (*Contemporary Review*, i. 204; and *Philosophy of the Conditioned*, p. 129). The language here employed is provocative of criticism. Waiving this, however, there is here some advance towards an exposition of a doctrine of Belief. "I believe that God is infinite . . . and to believe this proposition I must of course be conscious of its meaning." But *how?* Dr. Mansel did not press the acknowledgment to its issue. In order to believe that God is, I must be able to distinguish the attributes of Deity from the attributes of other beings; and in order to believe that God is infinite, I must be able to distinguish infinitude from limitation. And if this be admitted, it seems inconsistent with the theory that the Infinite is incognisable.

4. As Faith implies knowledge, by apprehension of the object whose existence is affirmed, faith in the Divine existence admits of an extension of knowledge, by reasoning concerning the difference of the attributes ascribed to God, from the attributes recognised as belonging to other objects known to exist.

These are the heads of an argument which seems to me to establish a philosophic doctrine of knowledge of the Infinite Being, adverse to Sir W. Hamilton's "Philosophy of the Conditioned," which is a doctrine of ignorance. For reasons thus indicated, I

consider that we are, or may be, in conscious relation with the Infinite Being, and may, by contemplation and reasoning, gain increased breadth and depth in this the highest form of all human knowledge.

APPENDIX B.

CONCEPTIONS OF THE DEITY EXISTING AMONG SAVAGE TRIBES.

THE question whether savage tribes have conceptions of the existence of the Deity, is one which has been brought much nearer solution within the last few years. The theory which accounts an acknowledgment of the Divine existence as a necessity of thinking, has been very generally supposed to be contradicted by ethnological and anthropological researches. The testimony of travellers and missionaries in several cases seemed to be seriously adverse. This impression rested indeed upon mere occasional passages in books of travel, and records of missionary labour, specimens of which were given in the Appendix to the former edition. Anything of an exhaustive, scientific course of investigation had not then been attempted. By the researches of M'Lennan and Lubbock, but specially by those of Mr. Tylor, the position of the inquiry has been quite changed. In Mr. Tylor's *Primitive Culture* we are supplied with an induction of facts, so wide in range, and tested with so much scientific care, as to enable us to judge with some approach to certainty as to the recognition of the Deity being a necessity of thought with the human race.

The question which, from a metaphysical point of view, would be expressed in such a form as this,—Is the necessity of human thought such as to involve the recognition of the Deity?—from an anthropological point of view is stated thus,—"Are there, or have there been, tribes of men so low in culture as to have no religious conceptions whatever?" This question had been repeatedly answered in the affirmative; for example, by Lang, as to the aborigines of Australia; by Moffat, as to the Bechuanas of South Africa; and by Azara, as to the native tribes of South America; yet Mr. Tylor now clearly shows that each of these authors has supplied materials for his own refutation. Indeed, after a very wide range of study, Mr. Tylor expresses himself in these terms:—"The asserted existence of the non-religious tribes in question rests, as we have seen, on evidence often mistaken and never conclusive." (i. 384.)

In entering upon the question, Mr. Tylor supplies a rudimentary definition of religion. He takes, as "a minimum definition of

Religion,—the belief in Spiritual Beings." (i. 383.) This may be objected to as too rudimentary, and almost in danger of being regarded as less than a minimum. And yet it points so directly and plainly along a safe line of inquiry, that we may without hesitation accept it for our guidance, leaving it open to judge afterwards of the results. "Animism" is the name Mr. Tylor adopts to describe the theory of spirits or spiritual beings, a theory "which embodies the very essence of Spiritualistic as opposed to Materialistic philosophy." The term "Animism" is adopted on account of the prevailing tendency of savage tribes to identify the soul with the life.

Accepting this starting-point for inquiry as to religious belief, it is obvious that the recognition of our own personality, that is, the knowledge of self as distinct from body, is the foundation of all spiritualistic conceptions. For the belief in the existence of separate spirits, which seems to be characteristic of all savage tribes, is clearly traced to the belief that the soul does not cease to exist at death. Mr. Tylor holds "that the doctrine of a Future Life is the all but necessary outcome of savage animism." (ii. 1.) It can hardly be said to be more than another form of expressing the same thing. If it be maintained that the soul does not cease to exist at death, it is only another way of saying so, to affirm that there is a Future State for the soul.

With this conception, there is an endless diversity of description as to the sphere of abode, and forms of experience in the Future State. These descriptions are naturally coloured in harmony with the scenes and occupations familiar to each tribe. Thus there are rich gardens, or choice hunting-grounds, or splendid feasts in the Future State. But in the midst of all this diversity, easily accounted for by local impressions and associations, the whole array of cases may be divided into two classes, according as the theory of the Future State involves the transmigration of souls, or the separate existence of souls. In both forms of the theory, there is evidence of a dualism of experience. All departing spirits do not pass into the same state, or form of experience. There is a change which is advantageous or the reverse,—favourable or unfavourable, —good or bad. Thus in transmigration some souls pass into beasts, or trees, or into inanimate objects, while others pass into higher forms. And where transmigration is not supposed, there are still two states of existence, one joyful and bright, the other sorrowful and dark. In some few cases the difference consists in transition to a higher state of being, or annihilation of the soul. Here it becomes necessary to find an adequate explanation of the prevalent tendency to distinguish two states of being. The *first* part of the explanation is certainly found in the conduct or character or rank of the men while in the present state. This is the

first and most obvious part of the explanation. But, as the change is in some cases for the worse, it is not to be supposed that men go of their own choice into an evil or miserable form of experience. The *second* part of the explanation is, that some superior power masters them, and decides their fate. There is very commonly among savages a belief in a soul-conflict in the next world. (ii. 20.) In this we come near some reference to Deity. It is not, however, in all cases the direct action of Deity which is referred to, but sometimes an animal, sometimes a man, sometimes a spirit, which drives back the souls from the retreat of the blessed. There is at least a superior power deciding man's destiny.

Advancing a step further, we find additional testimony coming from the exercise of religious feelings, connected with speculations as to the Future State. Departed heroes and ancestors are deified, and in some modified degree have religious homage offered to them. (ii. 103-109.) This, at first sight, may seem to militate against the recognition of Deity in any true sense, but it is an example of reverence, and of such worship as is offered to the Deity, and in immediate connexion with it there are more special and formal occasions for worship, which show a clear enough recognition of the subordination of these deified men. Such apotheosis, it is to be remembered, is not peculiar to savage tribes. The Manes-worship of the Indians of America, and of the natives of Africa and Asia, give testimony at least to a religious instinct, and afford evidence at the same time of an acknowledgment of a Superior Being.

The next step in the course of investigation seems to me one of very great importance in the line of evidence. Idolatry is not found among the lowest grade of savage tribes. Idol-worship is the product of a more advanced culture. On this subject Mr. Tylor says,—"Conspicuous by its absence among many of the lower tribes, image-worship comes plainly into view towards the upper levels of savagery." (ii. 157.) At the same time Mr. Tylor calls attention to the fact that "its development in extent and elaborateness" takes place "under higher conditions of civilisation." Here is a fact full of significance, the interpretation of which requires care. And to add to the manifest importance of the subject, Mr. Tylor observes that "Idolatry does not seem to come in uniformly among the higher savages." (ii. 154.) In the history of our race, the spiritual takes precedence of the material,—the simple worship of an invisible God comes before idol-worship. That Idolatry is a lower form of religion than the worship of an invisible God does not seem open to doubt. If this be granted, it seems inevitable that we conclude that the higher was the primitive, and that the first movements towards expansion of the religious system

tend to degeneracy of religious practice, in so far as they favour the introduction of idol-worship.

We have thus evidence of the general prevalence among savage tribes of these elements of religious belief;—that the souls of men exist after death, that in the Future State there is diversity of experience for men, that individual experience is determined by a superior power, and that worship is due by men here to an invisible Deity. The last and most important point is, that, in the midst of the polytheism common to savage tribes, there is a belief in the existence of a supreme Deity. This is now proved to hold true to a very large extent. There is a very general tendency with savages to connect particular gods with the more conspicuous powers of nature, akin to the nature-gods of the pre-Socratic Greek philosophy. But notwithstanding the consequent multiplication of deities, there is a belief in a sovereign or absolute Deity over all. Sir William Jones had said long ago :—"We must not be surprised at finding, on close examination, that the character of all the Pagan deities, male and female, melt into each other, and at last into one or two." Now, it is far more obvious than ever before, that there is a general acknowledgment of a supreme God, known as the Great Spirit, the Master of Life, the God of gods, the heaven-dwelling Creator, the Creator of good, the Creator of earth. In view of the evidence of this, Mr. Tylor has the following striking passage :—"Races of North and South America, of Africa, of Polynesia, recognising a number of great deities, are usually and reasonably considered polytheists; yet under this definition their acknowledgment of a supreme Creator, of which various cases will here be shown, would entitle them at the same time to the name of monotheists. To mark off the doctrines of the lower races, closer definition is required, assigning the distinctive attributes of deity to none save the Almighty Creator. It may be declared that, in this strict sense, no savage tribe of monotheists has been ever known. Nor are any fair representatives of the lower culture in a strict sense pantheists. The doctrine which they do widely hold, and which opens to them a course tending in one or other of these directions, is polytheism culminating in the rule of one supreme divinity. High above the doctrine of souls, of divine manes, of local nature-spirits, of the great deities of class and element, there are to be discerned in savage theology shadowings, quaint or majestic, of the conception of a Supreme Deity." (ii. 301.) To account for the presence of such a conception, ruling in the circle of savage thought, is a problem of great interest. The circumstances of intellectual development, the average standard of intellectual attainment, and the moral aspects of social life amongst savage tribes, must all be duly weighed. And if this be done, there seems no sufficient explanation of the pre-

sence of a conception which, on intellectual and moral grounds, might have been supposed to be excluded from the savage mind, than the acknowledgment that the conception is a necessity of mind in its attempts to formulate a theory of existence. To the human intellect, even in the lowest stages of development, the Infinite is the only explanation of the finite, the Absolute is the only rest for dependent beings passing away from the present scene with all the responsibilities of life upon them.

INDEX.

Absolute (The), 179; Hamilton's distinction between, and Infinite, 163; as such, a Cause, 149, 190; is the Infinite, 164; Hamilton's denial of this, 166; is the unrestricted, 177; not unrelated, 178; Hamilton's, the completed, 166; a contradiction in terms, 166; Hamilton's process of reaching an "absolute whole" fails, 170; "absolute part," incogitable, 171; Absolute Sovereignty and human freedom, 492; Holiness and moral evil, 492; Goodness and human suffering, 492.

Analogy, what, 244; Knowledge by, mediate, 243; can determine its extent, by a knowledge *before* and *above* it, 243 and 251, 252; also, wherein it fails, 250.

A priori arguments for the Divine Existence, 48.

Atheism, a violation of our nature, 51, 55, 374; condemned by our natural belief, 490.

Attributes, The Divine, may be thought of as limited *in number*, 186.

Axiom, The, "*Ex nihilo, nil fit*," either true or false, 361.

Belief precedes knowledge, 29; when, arises, 42-46; necessary beliefs, 43; criteria of, 46; universal, 43, 56; all, cognitive, 138; belief harmonizes with knowledge, 122; Belief in the Infinite, 3; rises *at once*, 150; accepted without reasoning, 47; though necessary, may be denied, 53; Hamilton's view concerning, 71; belief in an Infinite Personality, 409.

Browne's (Bishop) theory, 241-242; involves a *petitio principii*, 244, 245; self-contradictory, 246.

Butler (Bishop) supports a positive knowledge of the Infinite, 487.

Cause, An Infinite, not to be inferred from finite existence, 51; how knowledge of First, arises, 336; Hamilton's theory of causality, 341, 342; objections to, 342-363; does not recognise power, 345, 346; physical only, 351, 352; his doctrine of a plurality of causes, not true, 346-348; causal judgment, not merely of "new appearances" or "events," 348; of every finite existence, apart from change, 350; the cause ("causes") not contained in the effect, 350, 351; his theory leads to Pantheism, 352-361; excludes a First Cause, 361-363; falsely based on "a mental imbecility," 363; the common doctrine, the true, 363, 364; Hamilton's objections to, answered, 363-369; does *not* make consciousness self-contradictory, 365, 366; not a denial of Free Will, 367-369; Cousin's doctrine, God a necessary cause, confuted, 369-370; Causes, an eternal chain of, incogitable, 370; existence of the First —transcends proof, 375; our knowledge of Him, 379; process leading up to, 380; two primary cognitions concerning Causality, 372; a psychological problem, 371.

Clarke's *à priori* argument, 34-49.

Completeness not essential to knowledge, 215.

Conception (Indefinite), possible of an Infinite object, 265-267; Hamilton and Mansel's objections, 268-269.

Consciousness reveals self and not-self, 30.

Conscience, what, 395; reveals the absolutely holy God, 401; our conceptions of the Moral Ruler, 405, 406; Mansel's view of, 413.

Contradictions, Accumulation of, by Dr. Mansel, 95.

Corinthians (I.), chap. xiii. 9, 10, 12—consideration of the passage, 446-458; Hamilton and Mansel's exegesis, false, 446-449; Bp. Browne's, 449-450; Author's, 450-456; paraphrase, 457.

Cousin's theory of the Infinite, 9, 19.

Creation, not conceived of as an evolution from the Deity, 360; but as an *addition* to existence, 360.
Cudworth's doctrine of our knowledge of the Infinite, 211.

Definitions of Absolute, Infinite, and Unconditioned, Hamilton's, 163, 337-340; Mansel's, 181; Author's, 179.
Deity, how regarded among the heathen, 57; App. B.; inconceivable as "the sum of all reality," 81; nature of, indivisible, 88, App. A; existence of, 29.
Design, Argument from, 34.
Difference between "the Infinite as in thought" and "thought concerning the Infinite," 15.
Duration, conception of, arises from the consciousness of personal identity, 305; measured by succession, 305; outward, perceived, 305; of *changing existence* is *time*, 305; not necessarily implying succession, 328.
Duty, the sense of, implies knowledge of the Deity, 396-398.

Eternal, The, recognised by the mind, 307-311.
Evil cannot belong to the Absolute, 190.
Existence, the problem of the origin of finite, 31-42; necessarily one, 32; must refer to *all* finite existence, 35; danger from its division, 33.

Faith not sufficiently contemplated by Hamilton, 69, 99; bearing on the present discussion, 99; province of, 100; what it includes, 101; receptive and declaratory, 101; Mansel's view of, "regulative and practical" only, 103; degrees in its testimony, 107, 139-141; what it excludes, 109; not self-vindicatory, 109; not explicative, 111; relation to knowledge, 112; the basis of knowledge, 116: more extensive than, 117; supplemental, 118; authoritative, 119; if regulative, cognitive, 140-141; basis of reasoning, 153-156; relation to knowledge according to Mansel, 70, 103; in the Infinite, Hamilton's view concerning, 71, 134-143; declares *that* a thing is, and therefore *what* it is, 101; not necessarily all a thing is, 107; necessarily connected with knowledge, 121; and harmonizing with it, 122; what is contradictory of our faith is to be denied of the Deity, 130; what we cannot reconcile with our faith, may not, 131.
Finite, The, and Infinite, necessarily correlated, 20; out of the Infinite, but not conditioning Him, 89; finite knowledge of the Infinite possible, 194-196; App. A; not necessarily of the finite, 209; illustrations of this, 209; Mansel's objections to these considered, 210-15; all finite existence a testimony for the Creator, 489.
Fraser (Prof.), 178, 345, 354, 511.
Freedom of thought and discussion, plea for, 493.

God, not "unknown and unknowable," 290; *may* be conceived of as alone existent, 313; arguments for the Being of, insufficient, 48.
Goodness, Absolute, and human suffering, 492.

Hamilton's theory of the Infinite, 9; argument for Divine existence, 34; method pursued by, 26; doctrine of primary beliefs, 137-141; distinction between Absolute and Infinite, confuted, 159-176; theory of causality examined, 337-355; theory of creation, 355-361; answer to his letter to the author, App. A.
Harmony of Faith and Knowledge, 122; faith underlying, evident, 123; in every case, unquestionable, 124; to be sought after to the utmost, 128.
Heathen notions of God, 57; App. B.
Hegel's doctrine of the Absolute, approved by Mansel, 82; Mansel's vindication considered, 83.
Hobbes' theory of the knowledge of the Infinite, 235.
Holiness, Absolute, and moral evil, 492.
Howe's views of the knowledge of the Infinite, 486.

Idealism contradicts consciousness, 31.
Idolatry condemned by our natural belief, 490.
Inconceivable (The), cannot be an object of Faith, 79; 133; this destructive of Hamilton's theory, 134-143.
Indefinite (The), *subjective*, the Infinite *objective*, 227; 268; Hamilton and Mansel's erroneous views on this point, 226-233.
Indivisibility of the Divine Nature, 88.
Infinite (The) "as in thought," meaning of the phrase, 15; when belief in the Infinite arises, 42-46; not a negation of thought, 76; not the sum of existence, 80; 188; not extended, 87; exists in relation, 88; is the Absolute, 164; not quantitative, 183; knowledge of, clear, distinct, — partial, indefinite, 217-218; must be ever indefinite, 225; Infinite Personality, 68; the Infinite

distinguished from all finite existences, 88; duration of, measured by the changes of the universe, 306.
Justice, Divine, erroneously confounded with human, 491.

Kant's theory of the Infinite, 7.
Knowledge, Relation of faith and, 112; necessary, 121; harmonizes with faith, 114; prior in *time*, 115; mediate of God as Infinite, 148-155, 205; immediate, 145-147, 205; gradually developed, 150-153; knowledge is simple recognition, 199; by qualities, 204; its characteristics and conditions, 199; its relativity, not excluding the Infinite, 200; relativity, what, 201; the act of knowing does not affect its object, 201; knowledge in degree as cognitive power, 206; finite, of the Infinite, 215; not necessarily complete, 215; degrees, according to Leibnitz, 217; partial, not of a part, 220; capable of endless development, 233, 291; but not of perfection, 234, 291; *à priori*, and *à posteriori*, 234; of the Infinite, *à priori*, 235; of the Infinite, if *not now, never* can be, 294-298; rests on faith, 125; may *plainly* harmonize with it, 125; may not, 125; no rational action apart from knowledge, 129; finite, 207; limits of, analogous to those of vision, 210; reply to Mansel on this point, 211; of the Infinite, clear, distinct, but inadequate, 217; partial, 218; indefinite, 223; indefinite, what? 224; always indefinite, 225; of the Supreme Moral Governor, 402-405; of an Infinite Personality, 410-412; a special knowledge of the Infinite promised to Christians, 465-466; future, of the Infinite, according to Scripture, 468-474; Hamilton and Mansel's inconsistency on this point, 474-479; knowledge (the) of God, 494.

Leibnitz's enumeration of degrees of knowledge, 216.
Limits of thought, inquiry concerning, 257-264; bearing on philosophical inquiry, 491.
Literature, how influenced by the decision of the question under discussion, 480.
Locke on the idea of infinity, 183, 238.
Logical (The) faculty: its function in the development of our knowledge of God, 157.

Mansel supports and vindicates Hamilton, 13; his definitions of the Infinite and Absolute, contrary to his own theory, 376; their materialistic applications, 183; his illustrations, 185-189; objections to the Author's illustrations, 211, 212; on Infinite Personality, 68; view of faith, 74; view of a negative idea, 275; his general criticisms of the Author's theory, 482; reply, 483-486.
Materialism contradicts consciousness, 31; condemned by our natural belief, 49.
Matter not tending to Atheism, 36; hypothesis concerning eternity of, 40.
Maxims for the guidance of philosophical inquiry (Three), 128; their application to the present discussion, 489, 494.
M'Cosh (Dr.) opposes the theory of a necessary belief in Deity, 57; his "cumulative" theory examined, 60-67; he supports a positive knowledge of the Infinite Being, 291.
Mental phenomena alone, require a divine cause, according to Hamilton, 34.
Metaphysical necessity, 47, 52.
Method of inquiry, 23.
Morell's "History of Philosophy," 9, 11.
Moral, Man is, 388; moral principles, 390, 395; fixed and universal, 391; utilitarian theory of morality, 392-394; moral obligation implies belief in and knowledge of God, 396-398; the moral emotions imply the same, 399; notion of the Supreme Moral Governor, 405; revealed as Infinite, 415.
"Multitudinist" theory of charity, 493, 494.
Mysteries, Divine, 431, 432; what, 491; origin, 491; two classes, 491; some capable of solution in another world, some incapable, 492.

Necessary beliefs, criteria of, 46; in the Infinite, 24, 46, 56.
Necessity, metaphysical, 47; distinction between, and logical, 52.
Negative idea, 275-279.

Oneness of the mind, 122.
Order of inquiry, 29.
Origin of finite existence, problem concerning, 31, 32.

Paley's argument for the Divine existence, 34.
Pantheism, a violation of consciousness, 55; condemned by our natural belief, 490; personality, Infinite, 68; personality, not limitation, 408; Man-

sel's opposite view considered, 407-415.
Polytheism condemned by our natural belief, 490.

Qualities, known in themselves, or by their effects, 205, 206.
Question, statement of the, 1, 12, 19.

Rationalism condemned by our natural belief, 490.
Reasoning, possible concerning the Infinite, 291, 292.
Relativity as a condition of thought, 262; possible to the Infinite, 177, 337-340; whether existent within the Deity, not a matter of testimony by our natural belief, 93; how the relative may be transcended, according to Hamilton, 161.
Religion, "a function of thought," 290, 433; natural to men, 419, *et passim;* proved from consciousness, 419-422; history, 423-426; poetry and philosophy, 427; in all religions, the recognition of a Supreme Being, 426; religion possible only on the basis of intelligence, 428, *et passim;* Browne's analogical theory of religion utterly insufficient, 430; can be no religious consciousness of the finite, 434-435.

Scepticism impossible respecting the facts of consciousness, 30.
Schelling's theory of the Infinite, 8.
Science, physical and mental, bears testimony to a God, 489.
Scripture against the Negative philosophy, 295-298; bearing of Scripture testimony on the question, 437-438; nature of the Scriptural revelation, 439; witnesses to an universal belief, 440; teaches that denial of God is possible, 441; what it reveals concerning God, 442-443; what concerning our knowledge of Him, 444, *et passim;* passages considered, 458-262; metaphors and analogies imply a higher knowledge, 462-465.
Self and not-self, 30.
Sovereignty (Absolute) and human freedom, 492.
Space, a *relation only*, 331; inconsistency of Hamilton's speculations concerning space, 333-335; must be excluded from the notion of the Infinite, 321; Mansel's objection, 322-330; dimensions of space not applicable to the Infinite, 187.
Sphere of inquiry, 22.
Spinoza, theory of, 55.
Succession, measure of, 304; *subjective* succession does not involve *objective* mutation, 324-328.
Supreme, belief in the, 69.

Theology, systematic, overturned by Mansel's speculations, 292, 480.
Theory, Author's, 24-26.
Thought is comparison, 253; the Infinite an object of, 254; "conditions" only subjective, 255; Hamilton's dogma concerning, 254-258; comparison and conception, the two functions of, 259-262; its object need not be under any general notion, 261; characteristics of, 262; every object of knowledge may be one of, 262-264; in degree, as knowledge, 264; not necessarily determinative, 265-267; indefinite, not necessarily a withdrawal of thought from limits, 269-272; necessarily positive, 272; negative, considered, 143, 273; its bearing on the present discussion, 143; thought concerning successive duration leads up to the Eternal, 319; thought of an object as previously non-existent, possible, 342-345.
Time, what, 300, 305; its recognition involved in every mental exercise, 302; "pure," inconceivable, 303; the Infinite out of, 306; as a mental condition, not excluding the knowledge of the Infinite, 307, 311, 330; divisions of, 311; *pro*gressive only, 312; only the present real, 312; present, not a negation, 320, 321; the imagined regress and progress of time give an indefinite idea of the Divine duration, 312-317; summary of the Author's views on time, 217-218; Hamilton's experiments with "wholes and parts," 319, 320; time must be excluded from the conception of the Infinite, 318-321; Mansel's objection on this ground, 322-330; consciousness of time does not arise from the perception of outward succession, 301.

Unchangeable, The Infinite is, 91.
Unconditioned (The), 179, 333; not τὸ Ἓν καὶ Πᾶν, 26; "the Unconditionally limited" a contradiction, 168.

Whole, Hamilton's "Absolute," 169.
Wilson's (Dr. Geo.) illustration concerning the mysteries of human philosophy, 493; reference to necessary belief, 513.

Young's (Dr.) argument against a quantitative Infinite, 87; criticism on the terms "infinite" and "absolute," 180.

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